202

U.S. $5.95

DIGEST GROUP'S

The MegaTraveller JOURNAL

2 Official MEGATRAVELLER™ Gaming Resource

Coming in October...

A.I.

roleplaying adventure in a techno-fantastic age

Earth: 1500 years in the future — or is it Earth 1500 years in the past?

A massive citadel towers over your village and you tremble at the stories of the strange lifeforms which lurk in the shadowy wilderness that encircles you. For a generous offering, the priest-adept will "resurrect" your tools when they die. The great citadel provides for your basic needs, while you trade for "seeds," seeking to fulfil not only your material needs, but your wants, too. If you can just buy, beg, or borrow the right "nanneez" and the right raw materials, then you can finally grow the devices you'll need to help you on your quest for the ultimate tool: a GENII (Genetically Enhanced Nanotech Intelligent Interface)!

Shaping the decayed future with nanotechnology (molecular-level machinery), machine intelligence, and genetic engineering, A.I. puts you on an alien, future Earth with unlimited adventure possibilities. Remnants of ultra-high technology make the miraculous become reality.

A.I.'s new "fuzzy logic" and object-oriented approach eliminates the mounds of rules and lets you start playing right away.

Components in the boxed basic set include: 150 pages of background and rules, three-ring game materials binder, world map of the Alien Earth, and area maps of the major citadels. $29.95.

A.I.™ Not technology and magic – but technology AS magic!

Digest Group Publications
515 Willow Ave., Woodburn, OR 97071
Voice or Fax: (503) 981-4752

The publishing date of this issue is July 1991. The *MegaTraveller Journal* is published on an irregular schedule by Digest Group Publications and is devoted exclusively to **Traveller** and **MegaTraveller**.

All contents copyright © 1991 Digest Group Publications. All Rights Reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this magazine may be reproduced in any form or by any means without written permission of the publisher. Permission is granted, however, to photocopy any contents for *personal* gaming use only. Portions of this magazine are taken from **Traveller** and **MegaTraveller** materials published by Game Designers' Workshop and are copyright © 1991 by GDW, Inc.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Address editorial comments to:
MTJ Comments
Digest Group Publications
515 Willow Ave
Woodburn, Oregon 97071-2109
U.S.A.
(503) 981-4752

The *MegaTraveller Journal* is only available at an individual price of $5.95 through issue 2; issue 3 and beyond will be 104 pages and have a price of $12.95. Subscriptions are not available. Individual issues may be ordered direct by VISA/MasterCard, or International money order in U.S. Funds. Call or write:

The MegaTraveller Journal
Digest Group Publications
515 Willow Ave.
Woodburn, Oregon 97071-2109
Voice or FAX: (503) 981-4752

Editor & Art Director: Rob Caswell
Contributing Editor: James Holden
Technical Editors: Deb Zeigler, Tom Peters
Copy Editor: Deb Zeigler
Production Manager: Patricia Fugate
Playtest Co-ordinator: Tom Peters

Publisher: Joe D. Fugate Sr.

This issue's Playtesters:
Bill Baxter
Charles Kalina
Noah Katz
David McCoy

About the cover: Venturing into the body of a zakai, a large aerial lifeform native to the gas giant, Jadan, a pair of adventurers stumble into the breeding ground of some parasitic creatures. These animals make their home in the body cavities of the zakai. Painting by Michael J. Vilardi.

Artists inside this issue (in alphabetical order):
Rob Caswell: pp. 7, 21, 28, 29.
Joe D. Fugate Sr.: p. 49.
Mike Jackson: pp. 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 53.
Steve Longpre: p. 45.
Tom Peters: pp. 27, 32, 34.
Blair Reynolds: pp. 4, 6, 10, 13, 14, 15.
Michael Vilardi: pp. cover, 47, 51.

And special thanks to David McCoy for the concept of the 'G' advertisement and to David Riddell for his help on "Snapshots of the Occupation".

DIGEST GROUP'S

The MegaTraveller JOURNAL

Number Two

Adventure:

Defying The Wolf
By Rob Caswell 4

Features:

Deneb Dossiers: Arabella Von Ericsson
By Rob Caswell 21

Starship in Detail: Fiery Class Gunned Escort
By Rob Caswell, Mike Jackson, and Tom Peters 27

Centerspread: Fiery Class Deck Plans
By Rob Caswell. 28

Beginner's Luck: Starship Combat Example
By Howard R. Leidner 32

Gaming Digest: Off the Beaten Path
By P. Athans, J. Fugate Sr., and J.Kingston 44

Life Under the Vargr:Snapshots of the Occupation
By James Holden 47

Random Nuggets
By Matt Frisbee 53

Departments:

Helm Report 2
DIS Newsbriefs 3
Q&A 24
Traveller's Cache 38
Survey Sweepstakes 56
Coming Next Issue 57

Digest Group Publications products are available through these overseas distributors:

Canada: Andromeda Publications, 2113 Dundas St. West, Toronto, ON M6R 1X1, Canada; L'Avenir International, 4980 Buchan, Suite 101, Montreal, PQ H4P 158, Canada; TD Imports, 47 Stradbrooke Pl. S.W., Calgary, AB T3H 2A3, Canada; TD Imports East, 20 Parkhill Rd. East, Cambridge, ON N1R 1P2, Canada; Welcan Distributors, 406-12914 Anvil Way, Surrey, BC V3W 8E7, Canada.

England: Chris Harvey Games, c/o Matthew Harvey & Co. Ltd., P.O. 38, Bath Street, Walsall, West Midlands, WS1 3BY, England; Esdevium Games, 2, Morley, Surrey GU9 8LY, England; Virgin Retail Ltd., 95-99 Ladbroke Gove, London W11 1PG, England; Cosmos Games, 15 Webeck Street, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Notts NG17 4AY, England.

Australia: The Jedko Games Co. Pty. Ltd., 134 Cochranes Rd., P.O. Box 164, Moorabbin, Victoria 3189, Australia.

Germany: Fantastic Shop, Konkordiastraße.61, Postfach:21 01 65, 4000 Düsseldorf 1, Federal Republic of Germany.

Spain: Central de Jocs, C/Provença 85, 08029 Barcelona, Spain; Jocs & Games, C/ Muntaner, 193, 08036 Barcelona, Spain.

Traveller®, and MegaTraveller™, are trademarks of Game Designers' Workshop. The trademarks are used with permission.

HELM REPORT

DGP EDITORIAL NEWS AND INFORMATION: *from the desk of Rob Caswell*

Well, the response to *MegaTraveller Journal #1* has been very positive — better than we'd expected. We've gotten kind words from all sectors (no pun!), so it looks like we're off to a flying start. Unfortunately, due to demand, number one is sold out already! If you haven't gotten a copy, you can try looking in your local game or hobby store, but you'd better hurry.

One of the few criticisms we've received concerns our new Worldsheets and their "lack of useful numerical data." These forms' primary function is as a players' handout — not as a substitute for the *World Builder's Handbook* forms, the *Referee's Companion* system map, or detailed planetary system statistics. Their goal is as a summary sheet, giving players the "lay of the land" (so to speak) at a glance. If the referee wants more detail than given, he/she can use this sheet as a jumping-off point.

Sorry we're a little late with this issue. We're just now digging out from our move to Oregon (take notice of our new address and telephone number). Things have changed a lot since last issue so, let me bring you all up-to-date...

As of issue number three, *The MegaTraveller Journal* will be increasing to a 104-page product. Essentially, this makes the *Journal* an anthology/product, rather than a straight magazine. We can bring you a wider variety of more in-depth articles in each issue. With this change we will also be going to an irregular release schedule, but we're shooting for a minimum of two issues per year. Ultimately, the frequency will depend on the number of quality submissions you, our readers, send us. If you want to see the magazine more often, then send us more material!

We will be discontinuing subscriptions to the *Journal*, as it's no longer really a "magazine." If you currently have a *Journal* subscription, it will be filled at two old format (56-page) issues per one new (104-page) issue.

We've restructured and streamlined our **MegaTraveller** release schedule for 1991. We don't want to make any promises we can't deliver on. So, with that in mind, here is what our **MegaTraveller** release schedule looks like for this year (in planned order of release): *MegaTraveller Alien Vol. 2: Solomani & Aslan, The Onnesium Quest* (now a single, 104-page adventure/sourcebook), and *The MegaTraveller Journal #3.*

KEY TO THE STARS

In last issue, we did not include UWP statistics for the fold-out map since that information was available in earlier issues of *The Travellers' Digest* and other sources. However, we did make some revisions in that data when making the map. So, if you'd like an up-to-date UWP listing for the Domain — or if you just want to have an all in one, handy, easy-to-reference place, here's your chance. Just send us a letter-size SASE with 60¢ postage and address your mail to: *Digest Group — DoD Stats.*

ALL WRITE, LET'S TALK...

As mentioned earlier, our need for writing submissions is as strong as ever. If you would like to write for the *Journal,* we're eager to review any article proposals you want to send us.

Remember, when making a proposal, your goal is to sell us on your idea. Don't write us a query that reads like a teaser. We need to know the details of your proposed adventure or article in order to determine if it fits our needs. The best format is to present adventures as a referee synopsis.

If you have not previously been published or have not worked with us before, it is helpful to include some writing samples. Without this, we cannot guarantee acceptance of your work as we're not sure of its quality, or if it will be publishable.

WHAT'S NEWS

I think a bit of explaining is necessary to help youbetter use our DIS Newsbriefs column. Though it's natural to think of it as GDW's Travellers' News Service repackaged, there it has a somewhat different philosophy.

With the DIS Newsbriefs, we aim to provide you with stand-alone situations, not on-going storylines. Our goal is to make them *immediately* useful, while filling you in on some macro-scale happenings in the MegaTraveller universe. Items tmentioned will seldom be treated again in our news column.

For instance, take the "invading K'kree armada" from issue one. What you see is what you get. We won't be mentioning it again. We've provided a foundation for adventure in the format of a news bite. The rest is up to the referee.

NEW DGP GAMELINE!

Last issue I told you to expect some surprises. Well, this is the big one. In October of this year, DGP is releasing its first gaming product that has *nothing whatsoever* to do with Traveller.

Our new product is an original new game — **A.I.: Role-playing Adventure in a Technofantastic Age** (that's pronounced "aye-eye"). Set 1,500 years in Earth's future, the **A.I.** environment is one where high tech meets low in a decayed human civilization. The face of both humanity and the planet earth has changed. Nanotechnology and genetic engineering combine to make Earth an eerily alien environment.

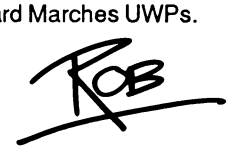
Holding civilization together are the mighty A.I. (artificially intelligent) citadels — the last bastions of true scientific understanding. These technological lords are in constant conflict, each trying to steer humanity to restored civilization in their own, humanly-incomprehensible ways.

Acknowledging Arthur C.Clarke's law that "any sufficiently advanced technology will be indistinguishable from magic," **A.I.** promises to be the first game to fully-detail how humanity could be affected and altered by ultra-high technology. Though players in the **A.I.** world have access to many advanced devices, the operating principles behind them are lost in the mists of time.

Whether you prefer SF or fantasy, **A.I.** has flavor and aspects you'll enjoy. As we've come to say about the game: " It's not technology *and* magic, but technology *as* magic." To find out more, you can look for promotional booklets on **A.I.** in your local game store or try to catch our presentations at ORIGINS or GENCON.

CREDIT WHERE CREDIT'S *OVER*DUE

And now, in our quarterly "who we forgot last issue" department, we have Nancy Parker, who was gracious enough to do some last minute copy editing for MTJ#1. Also, a special thank you to Dennis Myers who worked out many of the discrepancies in the Spinward Marches UWPs.



dis NEWSbriefs
Deneb Information Systems
161-1121
Update From Around the Domain

Delphine the Matriarch is Dead

[121-1121] At age 142, Duchess Delphine Adorania Muudashir, the matriarch of the planet Mora, is dead. As the morning sun shown through the Kaulenas Arch sitting in the waters off the shore of Mora's sprawling continental city, an official period of mourning was pronounced for the passing of the beloved and respected leader. The mourning will be observed for 107 days – each paying tribute to a single year of Delphine's service to the Moran people.

"It wasn't entirely unexpected, but that doesn't make it any easier," reported a spokesperson for the royal household. The Duchess had been undergoing extensive hospitalization over the past year and a half in treatment of a number of conditions. Her final public appearance was eight months ago at the Spinward Mercantile League's conference on trade policies with the Aslan Aorlakht.

In her stead, her 26-year-old grandniece, the Marquise Elane Shankarr Muudashir, has been taking on the administrative responsibilities of the matriarchal post. With Delphine's passing, the Caucus has approved of Elane to assume full control of the position of Matriarch of Mora. The official ceremony of her ascension to the Duchess' seat will not occur until the day after the period of mourning has ended.

Though Elane has thus far remained consistent to the policies set forth by her predecessor, the verdict is still out as to the directions her administration will take. "She has been responsive to the Domain's needs," reports a spokesman from the Archduke in the Giyachii arcology. "However, I'd hesitate to call the attitude one of overwhelmingly enthusiastic support. She knows her job and she knows her people – no one can fault her there. But she needs to take a closer look at the broad picture."

The Archduke himself is currently off-world attending to a number of issues. He is due back in nine weeks.

Delphine's reign has been a prosperous one, for both Moran citizens and those of the subsector. She came to power in 1014, when her mother chose voluntarily to step down so that she could better guide her daughter into the leadership role. After her mother's passing, she rapidly earned a reputation for setting dynamic and progressive trade and industry policies which cemented Mora's position as the industrial hub of the Spinward Marches.

Delphine will be laid to rest in the Sa Kararr Memorial cemetery off the northern coast of the continent.

World Economies Continue Downward Spiral

STATE OF THE DOMAIN — *SPECIAL FEATURE*

[98-1121] Since mid-1119, Jode (Deneb 0805) has been the target of persistent raids from the Vargr of the Assemblage of 1116. Fighting to protect the system with frequent SDB patrols, the inhabitants have met with some success. However, there have been more than ten incidents of Vargr attacks on vessels in the system this year and six ships are reported missing.

When the liner, Artina Maez, was destroyed in a raid on 321-1119, several prominent, noble TAS members lost their lives. This resulted in TAS finally taking steps to classify Jode an amber zone. Jode now joins in the outcry of many worlds along the Trailing Domain border which have recently been saddled with the threat of such classifications.

Economic ruin is looming strong for these planets if they are tagged as "amber worlds." Most Domain insurance carriers will not cover vessels travelling in an amber zone. The result is that most merchant and liner vessels will either modify their routes to avoid the world or increase their transport fees to cover the increased risk factor. Limited exports, inflated imports, and a great reduction in any tourism quickly follow.

Jode's discussions with the Archduke's representatives have yielded sympathy and a promise of some naval support in suppressing the raids, but little else. TAS is an independent organization and is operating well within their legal rights. Norris has urged TAS to give the situation more time before pinning on an amber classification.

TAS maintains that its primary responsibilities lie with its members, to whom it is dedicated to supply with accurate news and information. It will not withhold a system's reclassification at their expense.

Meanwhile, in another region of the sector, economic pressures of another kind are hitting Isurkun (Deneb 0524). With the pull-out of the Vilani megacorporations, the world inherited many jobless individuals and an economic void. Though smaller businesses have been thriving in the vacuum left by the megacorportations, they can not pick up *all* the slack left in the wake of the Vilani corporate exodus.

The planet's Naasirka plant, one of the largest in the sector, has still failed to attract a buyer.

Jode and Isurkun are but two systems in what appears to be a Domain-wide economic crisis. The departure of extra-Domain interests has forever changed the face of our region of space. Learning to adapt to these changes has proven to be a slow and costly process, and it will likely be a long time before we recover.

DEFYING THE WOLF

A MEGATRAVELLER ADVENTURE: *by Rob Caswell*

INTRODUCTION

Starting on the world Gabrael (Deneb 2807) in the Imperial year 1121, this adventure takes the players and their vessel deep into the heart of Vargr-occupied Corridor sector in search of a missing courier ship, *Enterprising Virgin.* The overdue ship, travelling from the worlds of the Restored Vilani Empire (RVE), is carrying plans for critical Naasirka replacement parts, which have been purchased by Dreyla Standard Systems, an up-and-coming Domain of Deneb electronics firm.

With little more than the knowledge of *Virgin's* intended flight path, the player characters must steal their way across hostile space to locate the missing vessel and return its valuable data cargo.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE (Referee Information)

Though this adventure can potentially be played by any group of characters owning or serving on a starship, it is designed with the *starmerc* character in mind. Starmercs are naval mercenaries, hiring out their ship and services in military and para-military operations. If you'd like more information on starmerc operations in general, see the article **Starmercs: Mercenary Military Starships** in *The Travellers' Digest #14.*

The play balance of this adventure is engineered with the expectation that the PCs will be travelling in an armed, 400-ton vessel. An ideal choice for their ship is the *Fiery*-class Gunned Escort, featured elsewhere in this issue with full deckplans and ship data. Other good choices include the *Lurushaar Kilaalum*-class Patrol Cruiser and *Gazelle*-class Close Escort, both of whose ship data can be found in GDW's *MegaTraveller Imperial Encyclopedia.*

By tweaking a few elements, the PCs need not even be starmercs. If the referee doesn't mind the work of altering the play balance, any manner of PC ship can be used in this adventure. Alternate adversary vessels for the adventure can be found in GDW's *The Rebellion Sourcebook* and DGP's *MegaTraveller Alien Vol. I: Vilani and Vargr.*

THE NPCs

Zaadi Henjeri Bureaucrat

577AA9 age 34 4 terms
Admin–3, Computer-1, Leader-1, Recruiting-1, Wheeled Vehicle-1

The owner of Dreyla Standard Systems, Henjeri was born into one of the more wealthy families of Gabrael. She received her education off-planet. A fairly independent woman, she knows how to approach a goal in a cautious but effective manner.

Unmarried, Henjeri currently carries a child with the aid of a "contract father" — a practice not unusual for the upper class of Gabrael. She is a smooth operator, having a good sense of when a matter requires a serious frame of mind and when one can relax and approach an issue casually.

She is tall with fine features. Her blonde hair frames an olive-skinned face.

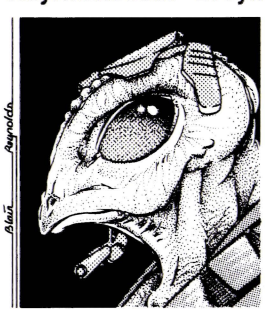
Jey Kingsley Starmerc Commander (ex-Navy)

A87977 age 42 7 terms
Pilot-3, Admin-2, Laser Weapons-2, Grav Vehicle-1, Gunnery-1, Streetwise-1

Kingsley is a portly man, though most of his bulk is pure muscle. He has a jovial nature under most every circumstance — even when inappropriate. Some of his peers have judged him a little unbalanced due to that attribute.

He is the commander/owner of *Kingsley's Hoplites,* a starmerc group with a mixed reputation in this sector.

Nayrmakosuat Droyne Military Leader



446B46 age 28 4 terms
Leader-3, Appeal-2, Zero-G Combat-2, Battle Dress-1,Flying-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Laser Weapons-1, Pilot-1.

Leader of the all-Droyne starmerc outfit, whose name translates to *The Deep Guardians,* Nayrmakosuat is new to interstellar dealings and feels a little uncomfortable around humans and other aliens. The *Guardians* are a *kroyloss* (fraternity) from the world Ayldem in the Trojan Reach sector. They have travelled to the trailing edge of Domain space, having heard of the good opportunities for starmerc operations there. Their business is young, with only two tickets under their belt — one of which they snatched away from *Kingsley's Hoplites.*

REFEREE'S SYNOPSIS OF SCENARIOS

Like "parts" in a novel, this adventure is divided into three scenarios, each of which is sub-divided into a number of nuggets. This section tells you what each scenario of this adventure covers.

Scenario I. The Job: The adventure begins when the PCs respond to a job offer by Dreyla Standard Systems to locate a missing courier ship, *Enterprising Virgin.* The job could be quite lucrative, but they have competition. Two other starmercs outfits in port are vying for the contract. The PCs must not only prove themselves the most capable of carrying out the job, but they must also clear themselves after being framed by one of their competitors.

Scenario II. The Journey: With knowledge of *Virgin's* itinerary, the PCs must travel across the hostile Corridor sector in search of the missing ship. This scenario is a collection of nuggets, some random, others location-specific, which will spice up their interstellar journey before locating *Virgin.*

Scenario III. The Jovian: Clues finally land them in the system of the missing ship. However, now that they've found it, they've also discovered that recovering the plans may not be as easy as expected. In the atmosphere of a gas giant, they encounter enormous life forms and battle territorial Vargr in a race to recover *Virgin's* data cargo and complete their assignment.

Using all three scenarios, the referee can run a multi-session mini-campaign. However, if you'd like to run this as a single-session adventure, you can use the information presented in *Scenario I: The Job* as the players' background and just run them through *Scenario III: The Jovian.*

SCENARIO I: THE JOB

Summary of Nuggets

1. A Promising Venture (key): The PCs learn a courier vessel traveling through the Corridor sector is overdue. Dreyla Standard Systems is looking for a ship to undertake a search and recovery (SAR) mission.

2. The Shopping Trip: Local tradition calls for a potential employee to purchase a gift to impress a prospective employer. The PCs travel to some local stores to purchase a gift. This also gives the players a chance to get exposed to Gabrael's society.

3. The Interview (key): Travelling north, the players go to the offices of Dreyla Standard Systems, where they present their credentials and vie for the rescue mission into the Corridor.

4. We're Number One! (key): The PCs receive a call from Dreyla Standard Systems informing them that they have been awarded the job contract.

5. Question Authority (key): Representatives of the local police and starport authority arrive at the players' ship. They inform the players that they have reason to believe the PCs' ship is involved in smuggling contraband material and that their vessel is grounded till the matter can be investigated. It is obviously a frame-up. If their ship can not lift by Forday (three days away), the PCs will lose the contract.

6. Hunting for Truth: The players search for clues leading to the plot to frame them.

7. Hollow Victory: If the players do not clear themselves of smuggling charges in time, the contract goes to *Kingsley's Hoplites.* However, during take off, the *Hoplite's* ship is hit by a freak sandstorm and crashes. This gives the players a little more time to discover who framed them and how.

8. The Confession: After the crash of *Kingsley's Hoplites'* ship, one of the surviving crew members divulges the information that the *Hoplites* were behind the framing of the players. Cleared of charges, the players are awarded the contract by Dreyla Standard Systems and can leave on the mission.

9. In Contempt of the Law: Having no luck in clearing their name of smuggling charges, the players decide to lift ship and embark on the mission anyway, in violation of local and Domain law.

10. Departure: Having made good their name and reputation, the players lift ship with the ticket and jump towards the Corridor sector.

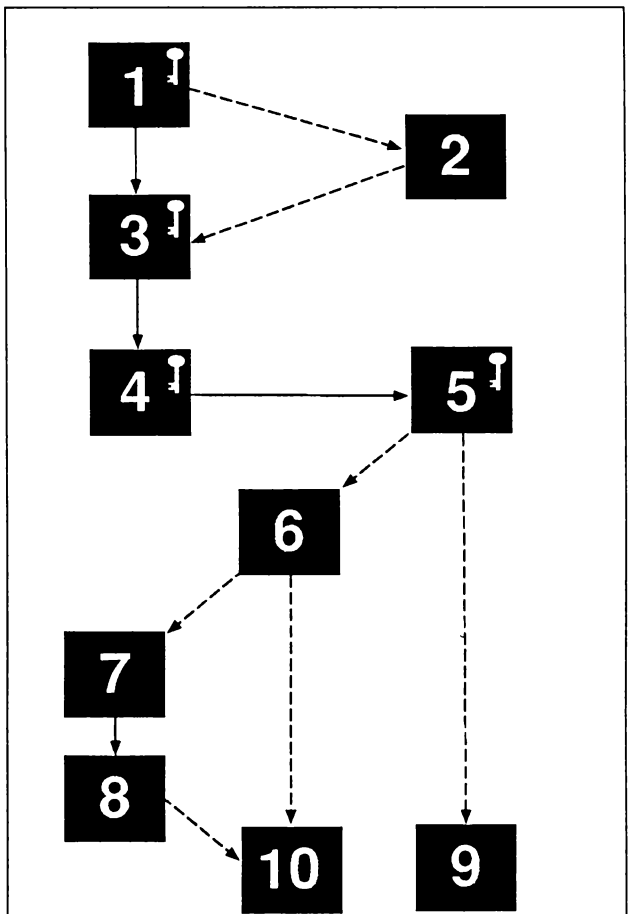
1. A PROMISING VENTURE?

The PCs learn of a potentially lucrative mission which they may undertake.

Location: In the main terminal of Gabrael Downport.

Scene: How you got to this rock is unimportant. How you're going to get off without losing money seems *all* important. You are wandering through the small central plaza of Muugagen Down starport terminal, staying ever vigilant for the possibility of a ticket that will pay your way off this world. If it doesn't come soon, you may just have to bite the bullet and lift ship with a loss.

The Rebellion's made life rough all around. For many ship crews, it's been feast or famine. At least the Gabrael Starport Authority (GSA) has made it easier by lowering their berthing fees — Cr10 per week! Though you haven't seen many go quite that low, several ports along the frontier have been adopting similar strategies, just to encourage trade and traffic.



Synopsis Diagram
Scenario 1

In a small alcove off the central plaza is situated the "job board". This wall-sized display panel sports a variety of ads, presented bulletin-board-style. In better times, the board had been choked with overlapping notices. A touch of the finger along the border of a hidden sheet would bring it to the front for reading.

As you approach the board, a small group of Droyne depart, chirping among themselves. As it's been during your whole stay here, the board looks sparse. However, there is one overlapped notice. A touch brings forward a promising possibility. It reads:

WANTED: SEARCH AND RECOVERY

An experienced and armed starship crew is needed to recover a missing vessel, probably lost in the Corridor sector. Pay good. References helpful but not necessary. Call Wonday to Fiday for appointment with Dreyla Standard Systems: 221-431-666.

Action: If the PCs call the number, they will be politely received by a carefully-groomed, young man who can give them an appointment for tomorrow morning. He gives an address in Feyr, a town 30 km. north of Tsabad (the town in which the starport lies) in the foothills of the Benjacquin Highlands. It is a friendly but strictly professional conversation.

If the PCs do not have an air/raft on their ship, they will have to find transport to Feyr. There are cabs that will fly the route for Cr20 round-trip.

While leaving the starport terminal, the PCs will once again see the group of Droyne who left the job board just before the players arrived. The Droyne are inside a gift shop. If the players stop to observe, they will see that the Droyne are purchasing something and talking with the store clerk. The players may recognize the Droyne as belonging to the crew of a starmerc vessel in port. A task roll can be attempted to overhear the conversation.

To listen-in on the Droyne's conversation:
Routine, Int (uncertain)
Referee: Each player must roll separately if he or she chooses to try to eavesdrop on the Droyne.

If the result of the task is *no truth*, the PC could not make out much of the exchange due to the dialects (both of the Droyne and of the human clerk) involved.

On a result of *some truth,* the PC can gather that the Droyne are purchasing something as a gift, but that is all.

A *total truth* roll will reveal that the Droyne are purchasing a gift for their prospective employer, as is the custom of this world. The clerk will commend them on their observance of local custom and assure them it will impress the recipient.

Any PC from a race with more acute hearing than humans (such as a Vargr) can reduce the above task level to *Simple.*

If the Droyne notice the PCs lurking nearby, obviously trying to catch pieces of their conversation, they will act a little nervous at the attention. As is, they seem rather uncomfortable dealing with the clerk.

The Imperial Calendar

Throughout the Shattered Imperium, the standard week is broken up into seven days. Originally, these days were simply numbered: Oneday, Twoday, and so on. Eventually, these grew into the names in common usage today (in order): Wonday, Tuday, Thirday, Forday, Fiday, Sixday, Senday.

The addition of the single Holiday gives the Imperial calendar fifty-two full, seven-day weeks and one extra day. This dangling day sits at the years' beginning and celebrates the founding of the Third Imperium. Archduke Norris has recently used Holiday as a time to rouse the patriotic spirit of the Domain's citizens, making it a time for looking forward to what the Domain can accomplish for it people. It has also traditionally been a time of peace.

2. THE SHOPPING TRIP

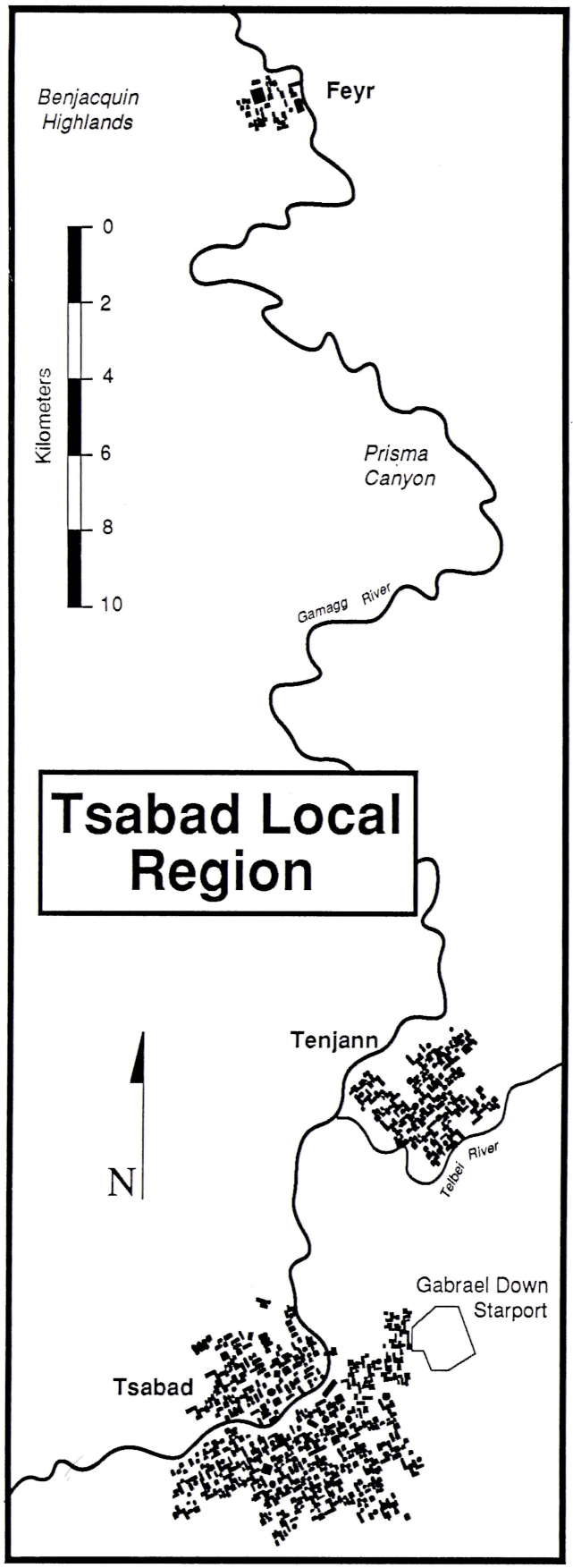
In accordance with local tradition, the PCs search for a gift to give to their potential employer.

Location: In the commercial district of Tsabad, Gabrael's chief town.

Scene: On Gabrael, it is considered polite manners to bring a gift to any prospective employer. That is what has brought you to the heart of Tsabad's commercial district. There are a variety of shops selling a plethora of exotic wares.

Since the air is thick with the local equivalent of pollen (which has proven to cause an extremely unpleasant reaction when inhaled), filter-mask-laden sophonts casually stroll down the narrow boulevard, glancing into the brightly-colored shop display windows. Items ranging from unusual pets to confectionery delicacies can be found here. Many brightly-colored Muugagen pigbirds buzz about the rooftops, enticed by the smells of cooking food.

Action: Most likely, the PCs will not know of this gift-giving tradition. The referee should arrange for some NPC to inform them of this custom if they had not gained knowledge of it through eavesdropping on the Droyne.



This nugget serves to let the PCs experience some of life in the streets of Muugagen and gather some information on Dreyla Standard Systems. The referee should have fun creating interesting shops and bizarre items which may be appropriate for a gift. There are no guidelines on what type of gift must be given, but something in the Cr50–100 range is recommended.

If the characters ask around, most people have never heard of Dreyla Standard Systems. They will say that the only thing in Feyr is Hallin Products, a food processing firm.

If the PCs decide to push for information, they can make the following task roll.

To find information on Dreyla Standard Systems:
Routine, Streetwise, Admin (uncertain)
Referee: If the task succeeds with *some truth*, an NPC is able to tell them that Dreyla Standard Systems is a small electronics firm which has not been around long.

If the result is *total truth*, the PCs will additionally find out that Dreyla deals in robotics and has been carrying on some manner of negotiations with Naasirka.

If the task is fumbled, the NPC will consider the players "rude and prying off-worlders" and will not give them any more attention.

3. THE INTERVIEW

The PCs visit their potential patron, try to land the job, and are informed of the mission's details.

Location: The offices of Dreyla Standard Systems, in an industrial complex 30 km. north of Tsabad.

Scene: As you travel north, your course takes you along the path of the Gamago River. About 20 km. into your trip, you fly over a gorge in the river, called Prisma Canyon. Unremarkable during the day, the canyon's walls light up at night with bioluminescent plants. Finally, you reach the town of Feyr.

Feyr is not so much a town as a collection of large, blocky buildings huddled in the shadow of the rising foothills. In your phone discussion, you were told that Dreyla Standard Systems was located in Block Three.

Block Three is a large building, about 100 meters on a side. It is primarily dominated by a food processing plant run by Hallin Products, though there is some warehouse and office space rented out to other firms. The entire building rests on a series of five-foot high pylons, shading a fungus farm spread underneath the complex. The farm is tended by Droyne workers.

After entering the building, you can easily locate the Dreyla Standard Systems office. The inside of Block Three is nothing extravagant — a standard pre-fab, modular design. Upon entering the Dreyla offices, you can see that they've tried to spruce up the surroundings as much as possible. New paint, pleasant lighting strips, some strategically-placed holo-sculptures, and so on. The offices extend to only a few rooms.

The man you spoke with over the phone greets you as you enter and ushers you into the office of Zaadi Henjeri, owner of Dreyla Standard Systems. Henjeri is a tall woman with dark skin and blonde hair. As she rises to greet you, you can see that she is in the latter months of pregnancy.

Her office is small but "neatly" cluttered. There are some attractive-looking plants by the window. The walls are adorned with electronic schematic printouts and holos of a variety of robotic systems. Regardless of its remote location and the somewhat shabby structure, you find yourself feeling glad to be here. You have the feeling this will all work out for you.

Action: Perhaps the only time you'd ever tell your players how they're feeling is when their emotions are being influ-

RECOVERING *ENTERPRISING VIRGIN*

The route listed below is the *Enterprising Virgin's* journey from the Restored Vilani Empire to the Domain of Deneb. Naturally, the PCs' search route will be in the reverse order. Each jump is four parsecs in distance:

Naagasa (Corridor 2511) — RVE [friendly]
B5278AB-9 524 Rv F4 IV

Darkmoon (Corridor 2111) — Client State [friendly]
D78A66B-7 Ni Ri Wa 712 Ca G1 V

Naadi (Corridor 1711) — Non-aligned [neutral]
A578572-B Ag Ni Cp 702 Na M2 V

Itasis (Corridor 1413) — Vargr Non-aligned [neutral/hostile]
C442375-A Lo Ni Po 902 Va F7 V

Demick (Corridor 1013) — Vargr Non-aligned [neutral/hostile]
A532879-E Na Po 702 Va K6 V

Dywosik (Corridor 0614) — Non-aligned [neutral]
C247547-A Ag Ni 921 Na G5 IV M8 V

Muugagen (Corridor 0312) — Dzarrgh Federate [hostile]
D453465-9 Ni Po 601 Vf M6 V

Salaam (Deneb 3213) — Dzarrgh Federate [hostile]
D576300-4 S Lo Ni 222 Vf M4 III K5 D

Tensas (Deneb 2810) — Domain of Deneb [friendly]
C556550-6 Ag Ni 504 Dd K8 III

Gabrael (Deneb 2807) — Domain of Deneb [friendly]
A473646-E Ni 424 Dd K4 V

Though it is not necessary to the play of the adventure, your players may want to see a map of the route. Maps of the Deneb sector can be found in *The Travellers' Digest #19* and in *The MegaTraveller Journal #1*. Corridor sector details are in *The Travellers' Digest #18*.

As with most ship's travelling through hostile space, *Enterprising Virgin* was running with its transponder off. Henjeri can supply you with a transponder activation code. By transmitting this signal within receiving distance of *Virgin,* it should activate the transponder. This will give the PCs a clear indication of the ship's position.

With this in mind, standard search procedure should probably amount to jumping into a system, refueling (probably at a gas giant), traveling to a jump point, then transmitting the activation code. If *Virgin's* transponder is activated, then the PCs can home in on the signal.

On the other hand, if no return signal is received and hostile ships home in, the PCs' ship is in a position to quickly jump to safety.

enced by outside sources. This is the case in Henjeri's office. If any of your players become suspicious, have them make the following task roll.

To identify the source of their unnaturally good feelings:
Difficult, Biology, Edu, 15 sec
Referee: If the roll succeeds, the player will notice the plants on the window to be Nyflan's Fern — a psionic plant which generates feelings of satisfaction, to creatures nearby, as a defense mechanism. In many less mentally-advanced life forms, this defense extends to eliminating appetite, thus insuring the safety of the plant. With most higher forms, like humans, it just gives a happy buzz to their surroundings.

If a player mentions the plant to Henjeri, she will apologize for any inconvenience the plant may be causing. She will claim the she uses it mostly for her own therapy — a statement not *entirely* true. If the PCs request the plants be removed, she will do so, but it may reflect poorly on the PCs. This is a job interview, after all.

If Henjeri is asked why her offices are located in such a remote spot, she will reply, "It was affordable". She then will tell of her plans to move the business to Tsabad in the near future. If the players present her with their gift, she will probably be delighted. Off-worlders have a reputation for disregarding local customs, so this will be a pleasant surprise and will earn them more points.

Getting down to business, Henjeri explains the situation surrounding the job. Dreyla has been negotiating with Naasirka to purchase the specifications and rights to manufacture some of their more critical robotic components. Before Rebellion events caused them to withdraw from the Domain, Naasirka was the largest robot manufacturer in the region. Since they left three years ago, their systems have been breaking down with a dwindling supply of replacement parts to repair them.

With the backing of several noble families, Dreyla has negotiated and purchased the rights to produce several of the more critical components. With the pent-up demand for these parts, Dreyla would soar in size and reputation once these parts hit the market.

"Everything we've done up to this point was geared towards that influx of money," Henjeri states, patting her belly and looking down at her bulging smock. "It's a guaranteed thing — or was."

Henjeri goes on to tell them that the courier ship carrying the data files on the Naasirka parts is overdue. The best guess is that it encountered some manner of difficulty in crossing through the Corridor sector. This sector of space was under Imperial control, until Vargr invaders streamed in from coreward, taking advantage of the Imperium's upheaval. Now it is occupied by hostile Vargr forces.

The job involves a mission through the Corridor in search of the missing courier, *Enterprising Virgin*. The basic pay for the mission is MCr2. If the data is recovered and returned completely intact, there is an additional MCr6 payment.

Henjeri then briefs the players on what will be involved in locating *Virgin* (see box entitled: Recovering *Enterprising Virgin*). She alludes to there being some other ships vying for the mission. Gabrael Down starport is not large and the PCs have been here long enough to have a very good idea of who's their competition.

A starmerc outfit by the name of *Kingsley's Hoplites* has been in port almost as long as the PCs have. Their *Gazelle*-class close escort, *Darting Stallion,* is berthed in a bay only two away from the players' ship. The other candidate is likely the Droyne starmerc group calling themselves *The Deep Guardians.*

Henjeri asks the players to tell her their background. She asks a few questions, then leads them out, telling them that she'll make her decision by Wonday and she'll be in touch.

As the PCs leave her office, they are hit with a sudden mood drop by leaving the sphere of influence of the Nyflan ferns. With this drop in mood, it is likely that the players will wonder if the interview really went as good as they felt it did.

4. WE'RE NUMBER ONE!

The PCs receive a call informing them they got the job.
Location: The PCs' ship, at Gabrael Down starport.

Scene: Looking out the windows of the bridge, you can see the starport tarmac glisten under the constant drizzle which has been raining down all Wonday. The locals said this kind of weather is a rarity, but you've had far too much of this gray, maudlin weather in a single day.

Suddenly, your comm comes to life. It's the GSA with an incoming ground communication for your ship. Acknowledging the call, your screen lights up with the image of Zaadi Henjeri.

Action: Henjeri goes on to inform the players that she has decided to go with their ship for her SAR mission. She then goes on to press the point that time is of the essence. If the PCs are going to accept, they must lift ship by Forday at the latest. She can not afford any further delays.

5. QUESTION AUTHORITY

The PCs are visited by the local authorities who inform them that they are under investigation for smuggling. They've obviously been framed.
Location: Gabrael Down starport, at the PCs ship.

Scene: An incoming call from the GSA presents you with an unpleasant surprise. You have been informed that your ship is grounded, pending investigation of charges relating to the transport of dangerous animals.

It seems that a man was caught trying to sell a breeding pair of Doyle's Eels to a local dissident group. He claims to have received the eels through a member of your crew. This investigation obviously threatens your contract with Dreyla Standard Systems. Not only does it mean you probably can't lift ship within the time frame Henjeri wishes, but it also damages your professional reputation.

Action: Naturally, the charges are false. Someone is trying to frame the PCs — and it's a good guess that it's one of their competitor starmerc groups who'd like to wrestle the contract away. The process of investigation will ultimately prove the PCs innocent, but will take three weeks to resolve. They will certainly have lost the contract.

The best course of action the PCs can undertake is to investigate the case themselves in an effort to clear their name. The local authorities will be observing them, but will not restrict their actions — providing, of course, they stay on the right side of the law.

6. HUNTING FOR TRUTH

The PCs investigate the details behind the charges against them in an effort to clear their name.
Location: In the city of Tsabad.

Scene: A sandstorm has blown in, blanketing the town in a dark and dusty shroud. It is late Wonday and you have till Forday to clear your name and ensure you get the Dreyla contract.

Action: It would be a good idea if the players call Henjeri and explain the situation to her, before she hears it secondhand. If they do this, her reaction will be a little concerned, but she will agree to give the PCs till Forday to clear up the matter. However, if they are not able to lift ship by Forday evening, she will have to award the contract to another party.

Library Data: Doyle's Eel

The Doyle's Eel is a silicon-based, anaerobic, metal-dissolving lifeform native to the Spinward Marches. The tubular body of an adult eel measures about one-third of a meter long and ten centimeters in diameter. Hermaphroditic in nature, all individuals of the species are capable of laying eggs.

In its natural environment, the Doyle's Eel feeds on veins of metallic ores. It feeds on electrical discharges produced when these metals are bathed in an acid solution secreted by the eels. Details of the process are not fully understood.

The eel also uses its acid to carve nests out of the ore, where it will lay its eggs. Once the eggs are deposited, the eel stands guard in the nest and stops eating. Shortly after the young hatch, the parent will die.

Though they pose a direct danger to humans by their strong acidic secretions, powerful jaws (able to bite through 2 cm. copper tubing), and electrical discharges, their greatest danger is indirect. If a ship is infested with Doyle's Eels, the larvae can be very destructive. They have a voracious appetite for silicon, some plastics, and other elements of ship electronic systems. Eradication of an infestation is a complex and costly procedure. Advanced infestations will require a complete overhaul of the ship.

Unlicensed transport of the eel is considered negligent transport of a harmful species and is punishable by fines from Cr100 to Cr10,000 and up to ten years in prison. Licenses are seldom granted, and then only to selected research institutions.

Henjeri's status in the planet's nobility can also be of assistance to the players. If they can convince her of their innocence, she can help open some doors or apply pressures to aid the PCs in their investigation.

The details on the plot behind the PCs' being framed are given in the sidebar **The *Real* Story.** The process of tracking down clues is left up to the you and your players to figure out. Good courses of action include visiting both of the competing starmerc ships, looking into computer records, and checking out the local tavern for any clues or rumors.

Morriseau, the *Hoplite's* first officer, is rather meticulous about making a record of all of his ship's external communications. If the players can somehow access these communication logs, they can turn up some damning evidence that will greatly aid in their efforts to make good their names.

7. HOLLOW VICTORY

Not able to clear their names in time, the PCs forfeit their ticket. However, upon receiving the job, the *Kingsley's Hoplite's* ship crashes while taking off during a storm.
Location: Gabrael Down starport.

Scene: Having come up without any substantial answers in the investigation of the charges leveled against, you had no option but to forfeit the contract. The contract has been awarded to the *Hoplites*, as the *The Deep Guardians* have also fallen under investigation over the course of the local authority's investigation.

As evening arrives, you hear the launch warning sirens sound two bays away. If you look out the window, you'll see Kingsley's ship, *Darting Stallion,* begin to lift. As it cruises out over the desert, you suddenly lose sight of its navigation lights when an unexpected sandstorm blows in. After a minute or so, the sandy air erupts in a flash of light! It looks like *Stallion* is down.

The *Real* Story

The gang behind the plot to frame the PCs is *Kingsley's Hoplites*. Though Kingsley himself has a rather unscrupulous reputation, he was not personally behind the set-up, nor does he have any specific knowledge of it. If the PCs personally accuse Kingsley of plotting the scheme, he will be quite offended — though it won't show.

The key personality behind the plot is Kingsley's exec, Mannushruu "Manni" Morisseau. Morisseau is allowed to operate with a fair amount of latitude. Kingsley is simply happy that the jobs get done. The process of how the goal is achieved does not concern him.

Morisseau's plot covers two levels — one frames the PCs, the other will point to *The Deep Guardians* if an investigation is mounted. In addition to trying to eliminate competition for the Dreyla Standard Systems deal, Morisseau has a deep-rooted prejudice against Droyne and harbors resentment over a contract they recently lost to the outfit.

The first step in Morisseau's plan was to buy-off a transient traveller, Darl Cromar, who would be going off-world before any investigation could start. He paid Cromar to hire Yulddayvokrayt (Yuldday), a Droyne working in the town of Feyr, to purchase a pair of Doyle's Eels from a disreputable merchant, Eneri Jeeg-Tautlan (a friend of Morisseau's), who also would be off-planet before "the shooting started."

The Droyne was then to deliver the item to another man in the chain, Byrne Kekaali. Kekaali was contacted by a man of Kingsley's crew claiming to represent the PCs' ship and bribed to deliver an item to a specific place at a given time. The item, of course, was the eel breeding pair, which the Droyne personally delivered. Having received the eels, Kekaali attempted to make the delivery. Meanwhile, Morisseau had tipped off local authorities about the rendezvous, thus enabling them to nab Kekaali with the goods.

Kekaali claimed he was paid off by the PCs to make the delivery. The only other shred of evidence he could present was the fact that he obtained the eels from a Droyne.

Action: The sandstorm passes quickly and all is clear again after about 5 minutes. Emergency vehicles are on the scene of the crash in the same time frame. It's hard to tell what exactly happened since the PCs will not have a clear view of the crash site.

As the night goes on, the word comes out that *Stallion* lost control during the unexpected gust and rolled into the desert floor. Three crewmen survived.

8. CONFESSION

After the crash, one of the *Hoplites'* crew confesses about the frame-up.

Location: The PCs' ship.

Scene: It seems like fate is out to get everyone. You and the Droyne crew are grounded until the matter of the Doyle's Eels can be cleared up and the *Hoplite's* ship has crashed in the desert. Your communication console alerts you to an incoming call. With the bad luck streak everyone seems to be having, it may be better not to answer the call — it *can't* be good news.

Action: The call is from the GSA. To your surprise, they say you've been cleared of charges and are free to leave. One of *Stallion's* surviving crewmen, ridden with guilt, confessed from his hospital bed that members of the *Hoplites* were behind the operation.

If the players call Henjeri, she will be overjoyed to hear the news, as she had run out of options herself. She gives the players the contract and tells them to embark at the soonest possible moment.

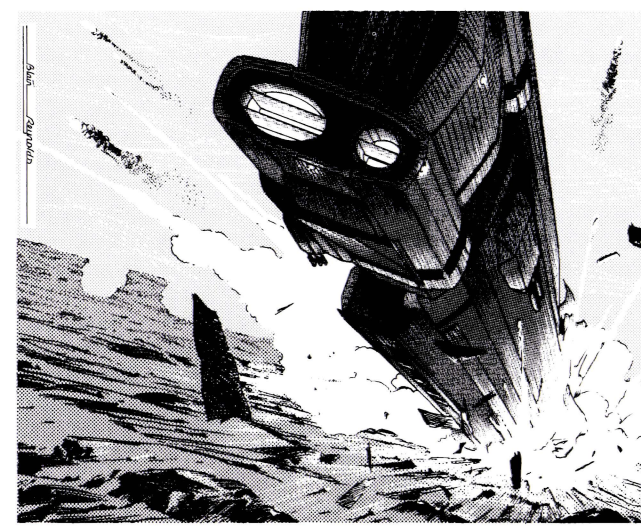
9. IN CONTEMPT OF THE LAW

Ignoring the restrictions placed on them by local authorities, the PCs illegally lift ship and undertake the mission.

Location: Gabrael Down starport.

Scene: All your attempts at clearing your name have been futile, but the contract is too good to pass up. You decide to lie to Henjeri about charges being dropped and violate the restrictions placed on you by the local authorities by lifting ship.

Action: If your players choose this route, they will run into major problems in the long run. Henjeri will still pay them if they return successfully with the goods, but she will give



them an ice-cold reception. Additionally, they will be arrested the minute they touch down for violating the restrictions placed against them as well as numerous ship traffic violations. They may be richer, but they will face fines, prison terms, and a loss of their starship operation permits.

10. DEPARTURE

Having cleared themselves of the criminal charges against them, the PCs take off from Gabrael and head into the Corridor sector in search of *Enterprising Virgin*.

Location: Gabrael Down Starport.

Scene: It's a calm day when you're finally ready to lift ship. Without the wind-borne dust, the usually light ochre-gray tinted sky is giving way to a pastel blue shade. There's a fair amount of activity in the port today, but little of it has to do with your departure. A 1,300-ton *Shaar Muzaandi*-class freighter (see page 35 in *Vilani and Vargr* for illustration), *Sirka Dunmaguu,* came into port at dawn. Loaded with trade goods and passengers to be unloaded, *Sirka Dunmaguu* is a beehive of activity.

Henjeri was not able to see you off this morning, as she had other business matters requiring her attention. However, she has gone over all the information with you the day before and has expressed her confidence in your ability to locate *Virgin* or find out what befell the overdue vessel.

After pre-flight checks are performed and the GSA has cleared your departure, you can lift ship and set a course toward the Corridor sector.

Action: This nugget mainly provides the PCs with an opportunity to say their goodbyes to Gabrael and embark on the next segment of the adventure. This serves as a good break point if you are running this adventure as a mini-campaign.

Shortly before the players depart, the players will be contacted by Yuldday, the Droyne who was unknowingly entangled in the plot to frame the PCs. If he has not done so previously, he will apologize for his involuntary contribution to the PCs' aggravation. It turns out that Yuldday is a sport (or *praytsirv* in the Droyne tongue, Oynprith) and has an extremely good grasp of Galanglic — for a Droyne.

Yuldday's job on Gabrael is only a temporary roost in his continuing journey through Domain space. He asks the players if they would consider taking him on as crew for a while. If your players decide to take him up on his offer, his statistics are listed below.

Their acceptance (or lack thereof) of Yuldday does not play any major role in the course of the adventure, but it does give the PCs two opportunities. One: to get to know the Droyne race a little better. And two: to add a little diversity to their crew. If you need further information on the Droyne, reference GDW's *Alien Module 5: Droyne.*

If you'd like to add more detail to the aspect of lifting ship in this nugget, you may want to reference the *Starship Operator's Manual.*

SCENARIO II: THE JOURNEY

The referee can use as many of the following random nuggets as she wishes to spice up the players' travel from the Gabrael to Dywosik (the location of *Enterprising Virgin*) systems. If you wish to make up your own nuggets, you are free to do so, as the ones listed have no direct bearing on the adventure's ultimate outcome.

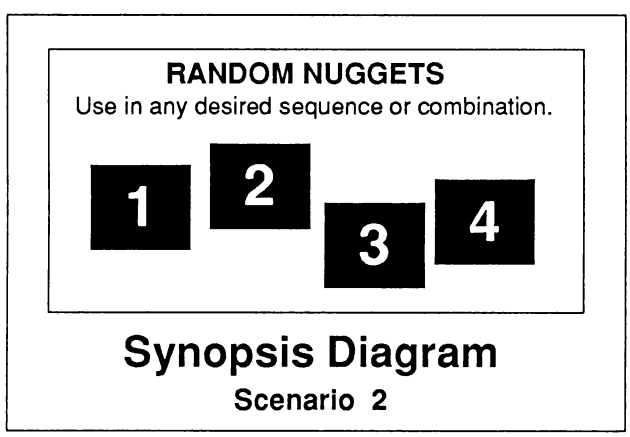
SUMMARY OF NUGGETS

1. Blow Out!: A Mayday signal is received from a Type 'S' which has lost its maneuver drive en route to the jump point and is vectoring for deep space. With a Virushi passenger, leaking radiation, and the ship in a tumble, rescue may prove rather challenging.

2. Dogfight: The players come out of jump practically in the middle of a ship battle between two Vargr craft. One is friend, the other foe — but can the players tell which is which?

3. Do Not Disturb: While traveling through a hostile Vargr-occupied system, the players stumble across an abandoned Domain Naval fleet courier ship.

4. Under Pressure: While refueling at the gas giant in a hostile Vargr system, the players' ship ruptures its hull while flying through tremendous turbulence. The players must land on the Vargr-occupied world long enough to effect repairs.



1. BLOW OUT!

The PCs get a Mayday signal from a Type 'S' scout/courier which has had an explosion in its drive room. A rescue must be attempted.

Location: In the Tensas system.

Scene: You've just finished refueling from the inner gas giant in the Tensas system. The brightly-banded orb starts to dwindle behind you as you burn out to the 100 diameter jump point.

Suddenly, your radio bursts to life on channel 25 with a Mayday signal: "...scoutship *Annabouboula!* We've had an explosion in the drive room. We're on auxiliary power — heading out to flatspace with no maneuver. Need assistance...(*cough*) immediately. Repeating, Mayday! Mayday! (*cough*) This is the scoutship *Annabouboula...*"

You can locate their transponder, transmitting along a vector departing the main world of Tensas, a small farming planet. There are no other transponder signals being received, which makes you the only ship in a position for a rescue.

Action: If the PCs decide to ignore the Mayday, remind them of their responsibility and inform them that, if their flight recorder ever gets reviewed and it's seen they ignored a Mayday signal, they could be in big trouble.

As the players head toward the ship, they are in constant radio contact with the pilot, Eneri Dokuusha. As time goes on, he sounds weaker and weaker. If asked what caused the explosion, he will say that his best guess is that *Annabouboula* had an impact with a micrometeorite. Finally they stop receiving his voice, though they're still getting a open carrier wave from *Annabouboula.*

When the PCs finally catch up with *Annabouboula,* they will find the ship in a tumble. The damage to the engine room can be clearly seen: a gaping, black rent in the hull. It's extremely fortunate that the main crew compartment wasn't breached.

There is obviously no hope of repair. *Annabouboula* is headed for a deep space grave. The best the PCs can do is make sure she doesn't take what's left of her crew with her. The two obvious options at this point are either to stop the ship's tumble by nudging it with the PCs' own craft and do an EVA to rescue the crew, or have *Annabouboula's* crew suit-up and jump for it.

Unfortunately, the PCs haven't heard from *Annabouboula's* pilot for some time. If they continue to hail the ship, a soft, hoarse voice will answer the comm. He claims to be the ship's only passenger, Hybratym, a Virushi agricultural consultant. He was in his quarters for safety and noticed that the radio transmissions from the bridge had ceased. He tells the players that Dokuusha is unconscious — possibly due to radiation sickness from leaks in the power plant system. Hybratym is still conscious due to the Virushi's high tolerance to radiation.

If the players suggest that Hybratym put the pilot into a suit and jump for it, he will point out that he does not have a suit. This means the only option open to the PCs is to stop *Annabouboula's* spin and board her. Doing an EVA while she is still spinning is far too dangerous to even attempt.

To stop the spin of *Annabouboula* enough to allow boarding:
Difficult, Pilot, Int, 15 min (hazardous)
Referee: If there is an *exceptional failure* result, one of the two ships has lost hull integrity due to a hard impact and is losing its air supply. If the task is fumbled, there is a hull breach as well as damage to the PCs' reaction control system. This means they will have to repair the damage before continuing the attempt to quell *Annabouboula's* spin.

With an *exceptional success,* the spin is all but completely dampened.

Once aboard the ship, the PCs will have to find a way to transport the giant Virushi to their ship without a spacesuit. Virushi are huge sophonts, three meters long, almost two high, and massing about a thousand kilos (see *The Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society #12* or *The Travellers' Digest #16* **Library Data** for additional info) — sometimes referred to as "walking tanks".

If the players inspect the cargo compartment, they will find an airtight cargo container that should be able to hold Hybratym for the duration of the EVA back to the PCs' ship. However, it will only contain air long enough for five minutes. If the players look, they may be able to locate some oxygen canisters the Virushi could take with him. These could help in supplementing his air supply.

2. DOGFIGHT

The PCs emerge from jump into Vargr starshipduel.
Location: The Salaam system.

Scene: This jump has brought you across political boundaries, into space occupied by the Vargr Dzarrgh Federate. You'll need to be traveling in silence for most of the rest of your journey, so your transponder has been deactivated (a punishable offense while traveling in Domain space).

Almost on schedule to the second, your jump field dissipates and the Salaam system snaps into focus. Immediately the sound of klaxons fill the bridge. Your sensors have picked up two craft in the immediate vicinity — also running with transponders damped. They appear to be engaged in combat with one another. One is a 100-ton Vargr scout, the other a 400-ton Vargr corsair.

Action: The situation will not be immediately obvious, but the corsair is in the employ of the Dzarrgh Federate while the scout is actually a Domain-operated craft carrying Vargr who have been operating as spies for the Domain Navy in this area. The corsair captain wants either to capture the fleeing scout or destroy it. Either will suit his needs. Stats for both of these ship can be found in *MegaTraveller Alien Vol. I: Vilani and Vargr.*

Determining that the PCs' ship is likely not a hostile Vargr craft, the scout hails the PCs' ship for assistance. If the players do not jump into the fray, the scout will likely be destroyed. Its jump drive is already temporarily disabled.

However, if the players avoid the fight, they still have to worry about the corsair. It knows they're in system. It will either radio for a ship to intercept the PCs or it will take on the task itself once it finishes with the scout. Either way, the PCs are well advised to finish-off the corsair in quick time.

3. DO NOT DISTURB

The PCs discover a drifting Domain Naval courier ship.
Location: Anynon-Domain system.

Scene: You've just refueled at the gas giant. Except for some minor problems with your static-charge equalization system, all went smoothly. You're heading for the jump point and preparing to send out *Virgin's* transponder activation code when your sensors pick up a large mass, roughly starship size. It could be *Enterprising Virgin.*

As you get closer, more facts reveal themselves. There is too much mass for it to be a 100-ton commercial courier and the mass is in several pieces, not one, large chunk. Suddenly your anomalous movement sensors activate motion from the object. It's a missile, heading straight for your ship!

Action: The missile carries a standard warhead. Once the missile is destroyed or strikes the players' ship, two more jump to life from the wreckage. Once they have run their course, there are no more attacks.

If the players approach for a closer look at the object that has been firing on them, they will find a debris field. This is obviously the remains of a ship, though determining its type will take close inspection and a trained eye.

To determine type of ship:
Difficult, Engineering, Int, 5 min
Referee: If the task succeeds, the players find they are looking at the debris field of a 400-ton Domain Naval fleet courier.

On exceptional success, they find the ship has undergone some modification from the stock design, though the exact nature of the modifications is not known.

More information on the wreck may be obtained if some of the PCs do an EVA. While in the wreckage, they must be careful not to rip their suits on any jagged protrusions. About 40% of the hull is intact, including some of the crew compartment.

To gain information from an EVA of the wreck:
Routine, Int, 10 min
Referee: If the roll succeeds, the players determine that this was the Naval fleet courier *Billu.* On an *exceptional success,* they will find *Billu's* flight recorder. Examination of the recorder will show *Billu's* mission to be covert surveillance in the Corridor.

The ship was heavily modified to carry an advanced sensor suite. The missiles fired at the players' ship were evidently a last-ditch effort to protect themselves while under attack by two Vargr ships. The crew released the missiles with modified proximity homing warheads — effectively "smart mines". The warheads destroyed one ship, but the other scored a direct hit and destroyed *Billu* and its crew.

Billu has been missing for over two years. If the PCs find the flight recorder and return it to naval sources, they will be rewarded a Cr50,000 finder's fee.

4. UNDER PRESSURE

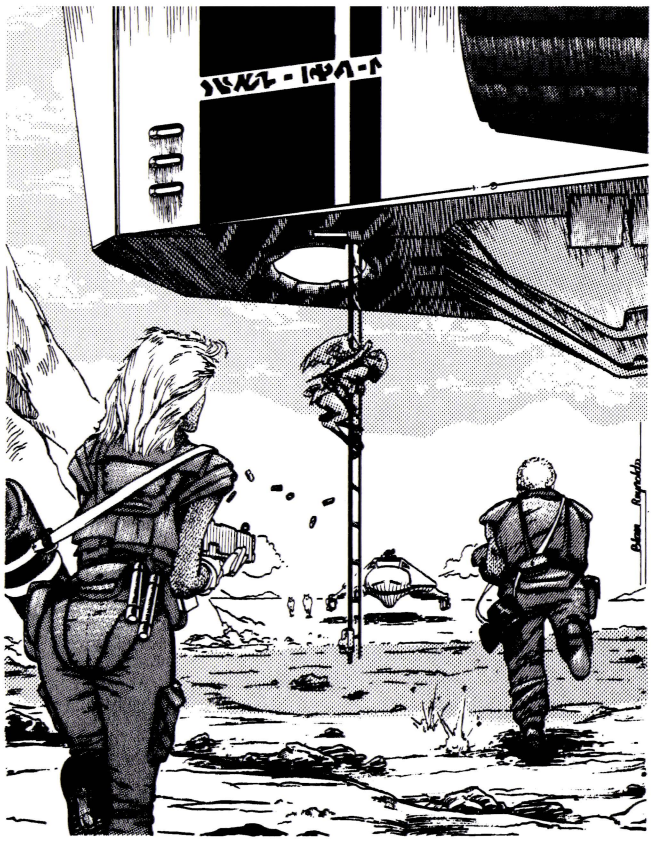
The PCs' ship is damaged while undertaking gas giant refueling and must land on a hostile world for repairs.
Location: In the Muugagen system.

Scene: It was tough enough to sneak into the gas giant for refueling with one of its moons being a Vargr-occupied world. But you didn't count on the atmospheric turbulence being so rough as you dove the giant for fuel. The buffeting ruptured some hull plates and now you're leaking away your air.

Engineering estimates put it at 38 hours before you can patch all the leaks. Your ship's computer gives you 15 hours before you run out of air. The only atmospheric refuge within range which will allow you to complete repairs is the Vargr-dominated world, Muugagen: a moon of the gas giant. As you mull these facts over in your mind, your ears pop with the decreasing air pressure.

Action: At one gee, travel time to Muugagen is a little under six and a half hours (it is 125,000 km. distant). During that journey, the players should make at least two rolls to avoid being detected by local patrols. If discovered, patrols will attack using 100-ton Vargr scouts (see *MegaTraveller Alien Vol. I: Vilani and Vargr* for details).

To avoid detection by patrols:
Difficult, Ship Tactics, Sensor Ops (uncertain)
Referee: If the roll fails, a nearby ship will train all its sensors on the PCs' vessel in order to verify their detection reading. Once the Vargr have determined what the PCs are, the Vargr will radio the PCs' ship, informing the PCs that they will be escorted to the planet and expected to surrender their ship. If the roll is fumbled, the Vargr Scout will open fire and radio for support.



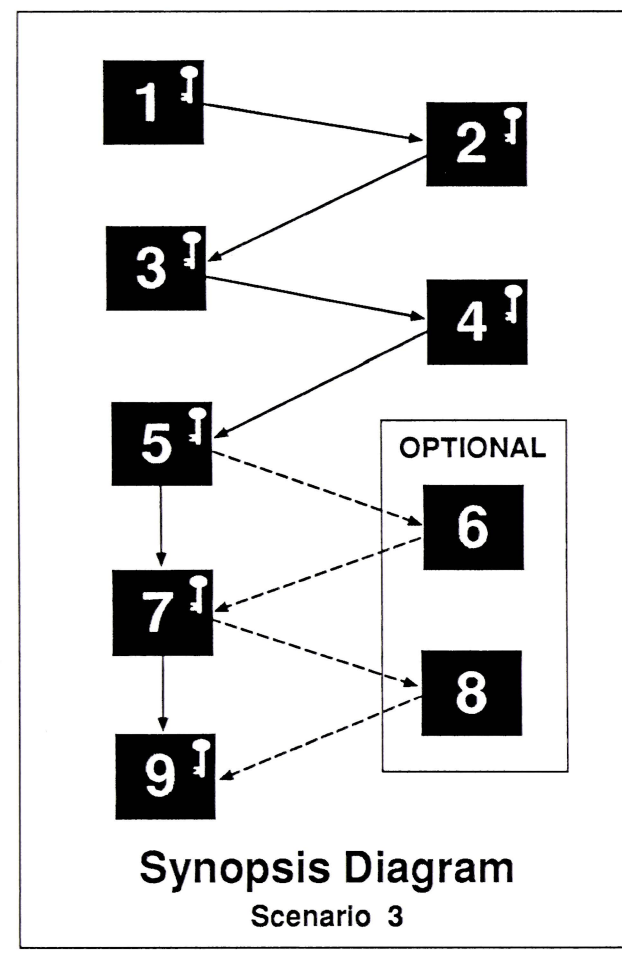
If the PCs make it through the patrols, they must then land undetected in the outback of Muugagen. The population of the planet is small and concentrated, so there is plenty of wilderness to hide in.

To land on Muugagen without detection:
Difficult, Ship Tactics, Pilot (fateful, uncertain)
Referee: If the roll fails, the PCs' ship is detected during reentry. Shortly after landing, the ship will be approached by one *Ghoerruegh* g-carriers (see *MegaTraveller Alien Vol. I: Vilani & Vargr* for details) carrying twelve Vargr troopers. If the roll is fumbled, the PCs are both detected and inadvertently land near a Vargr wilderness outpost.

Once landed, repairs can commence. While grounded, the PCs may be plagued by more than Vargr troops. Elements of the environment can conspire against them, such as sticky, airborne seed pods which cover the ship's windows and delicate sensor apertures.

To complete repairs to the hull of the players' ship:
Routine, Engineering, Int, 3 hours
Referee: If the task is fumbled, the damage to the hull has been increased and the time increment will increase to 4 hours. *Exceptional success* cuts the repair time in half.

SCENARIO III: THE JOVIAN
Summary of Nuggets
1. Starfall: Dywosik (key): Entering the Dywosik system, the players manage to locate the signal of *Enterprising Virgin*, somewhere in the vicinity of the system's sole gas giant, Jadan.
2. In the Company of a Giant (key): Following *Virgin's* transponder signal, the players' ship approaches the system's gas giant.
3. Into the Cauldron (key): The players' ship descends into the gas giant's atmosphere in an attempt to locate *Virgin*.
4. Unexpected Hosts (key): When the source of the signal is located, it's found to emanate from within a giant creature native to the gas giant's atmosphere. Sensors will show that the ship collided with the creature and rests within.
5. Belly of the Whale (key): Entering the creature by means of physically crawling through its "pores", the players can work their way to the wreck of *Virgin*.
6. The Wolf Strikes: An undetected Vargr corsair attacks the players' ship(s).
7. In the Wreck (key): Once they have entered the wreck of the *Virgin*, the players search for the Naasirka data file they were hired to recover. *Virgin's* crew is long dead.
8. Fatal Wound: While the players are still inside *Virgin's* wreck, the gas giant creature finally succumbs to the injury it suffered during its collision with the courier. It begins to fall deeper into the atmosphere and the players must try to escape to their ship.
9. Recovery! (key): With the information retrieved, the players have accomplished their mission and can head for home.



Synopsis Diagram
Scenario 3

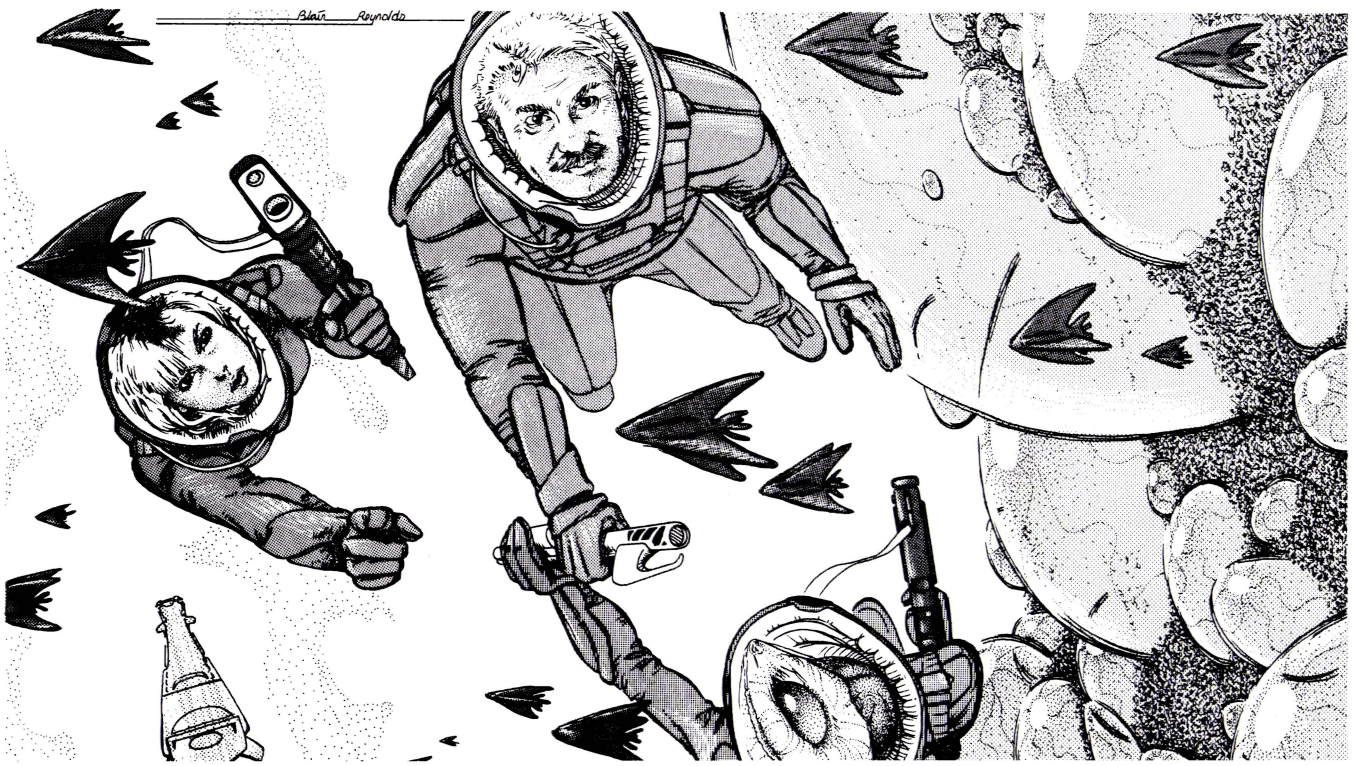
1. STARFALL: DYWOSIK
The PCs enter the Dywosik system and look for clues about *Virgin's* whereabouts.
Location: Aboard the PCs' vessel in the Dywosik system.
Scene: Finally out of Dzarrgh space, you still have more than half of the trip still ahead of you. The Dywosik system is listed in your files as a non-aligned system, which means you're not out of the woods yet. During your stay in-system, you have been challenged by one of the indigenous SDBs, but they gave you no trouble after your identity and intentions were verified.

At the jump point, you send out *Virgin's* transponder activation signal, at several intervals to account for rotating bodies in the system that could be shielding the vessel. Shortly before it seems that your signal will fall on deaf ears, a weak transponder signal crackles to life on your radio. The static-filled transmission is coming from the direction of the system's sole gas giant. The signal is extremely weak and fades in and out. However, you can decipher enough to know you've found *Enterprising Virgin!*

Action: Locating and maintaining the transponder signal can be simulated by the following task:

To acquire and maintain *Virgin's* transponder signal:
Difficult, Communications, Int, varies
Referee: While trying to initially acquire the signal, the player operating the communications gear should make a determination role if the task fails. Once the signal is located and the crew is en route to the gas giant, a determination roll is not required.

As the PCs listen, the signal may fade for hours at a time, but will steadily grow stronger as they near the gas giant.



2. IN THE COMPANY OF A GIANT

The PCs travel to Jadan, the system's gas giant, tracking the transponder signal of *Virgin*.
Location: Aboard the PCs' ship, in the vicinity of Jadan.

Scene: You have gone into orbit about the gas giant, Jadan. Below you (or above, depending on your starship's orientation) rolls a maelstrom of brightly-colored cloud bands. As you skim above the night side of the planet, periodic flashes of mega-lightning can be seen arcing in the cloud decks.

You still have *Virgin's* transponder signal, though it seems to be getting weaker. The signal is coming from within the gas giant, apparently in one of the upper cloud decks.

Action: The PCs can try to refine their fix on the position of *Virgin*. To do so, use the following task:

To pinpoint the location of *Virgin's* transponder signal:
Routine, Communications, Sensor Ops, 10 min
Referee: If the task fails, retries are done without a determination roll.

3. INTO THE CAULDRON

Having located *Virgin's* transponder beacon, the PCs dive into Jadan's cloud deck.
Location: Aboard the PCs' ship, in the upper atmosphere of Jadan.

Scene: Having found the coordinates of the source of *Virgin's* transponder signal, you take your ship down into Jadan's turbulent clouds to find the missing vessel. The descent is rough. You and your vessel are bounced about quite a bit.

Action: The players may take their starship down into Jadan's atmosphere, though if they have an auxiliary craft, it may be better to make the expedition with it. This way, the mothership can keep watch in the high guard position. Though non-aligned, this system is by no means safe.

Though it is an option, it is not recommended that the players drop in a grav vehicle (non-spacecraft), as it will not have the same level of control and stability that a spacecraft does.

To safely descend into Jadan's atmosphere:
Routine, Pilot (Ship's Boat or Grav Vehicle), Int, 7 min
Referee: Failure of the roll will make the PCs temporarily lose control of their ship and ultimately place them off course. They will then need to reacquire *Virgin's* fading signal and try to home in on it. It also means they have to travel further through the cloud deck, making the possibility of being hit by mega-lightning even more likely.

Refrain from actually having the PCs' ship hit, but some dramatic close-calls could keep your players on the edge of their seats.

As the players cruise through the cloudscape, they are be buzzed by small, aerial objects — obviously biological in

nature, and about 2 m long. Though they disappear too quickly to be examined in detail, they show the PCs that Jadan does support an advanced biosphere.

If the PCs choose to take a grav vehicle instead of a spacecraft into Jadan's atmosphere, the difficulty level of the above task should be raised to *Difficult*.

4. UNEXPECTED HOSTS

Following the transponder signal, the PCs encounter a herd of huge, floating creatures in Jadan's atmosphere.
Location: Aboard the PCs' ship, in the upper atmosphere of Jadan.

Scene: Now cruising between cloud decks, you are treated to a beautifully panoramic cloudscape. The true magnitude of your view is not immediately obvious. As you look to the horizon, it is thousands of miles away, as opposed to the hundreds of miles experienced flying over most terrestrial worlds.

As you get close to the coordinates of the transponder signal, you notice a dark, puffy collection of clouds ahead of you. Drawing nearer, you discover they are not clouds at all, but airborne lifeforms of some kind.

Enormous in size, the largest of the beasts in this herd measure almost a kilometer wide. They are yellow-green in color with mottled markings. Their bodies look like squashed, lumpy spheres and a large, filamentary "keel" protrudes from below. Smaller, winged creatures swoop and soar around the herd, like flies buzzing a cow.

Action: The creatures will only be semi-aware of the presence of the PCs. They will not give any kind of significant reactions. If the PCs check their library computer, they can find out more information about the ponderous, floating aliens.

To query library data for information on the gas giant aliens:
Simple, Computer, Int, 90 sec
Referee: The creatures are called zakai. When the players get the data, show or read them the sidebar entitled **Library Data: Zakai**. If the task fails, it means that the data is nested too deep in the files and is difficult to find. The players may retry the task without penalty. Obviously, the warning satellites mentioned in the library data entry have been destroyed since the entry was written.

5. BELLY OF THE WHALE

Determining that *Virgin* has crashed inside one of the zakai, the PCs enter its body and make their way towards the wreckage.
Location: Within a giant zakai.

Scene: Floating along with the zakai herd, you've been able to get a fix on the transponder beacon. It appears to be coming from *within* one of the creatures — a specimen measuring about 400 meters in width. Indeed, when you examine the creature hosting the signal, you find an enormous, still-raw scar running along his backside. His coloration also looks different from that of the others, with darker tones and less mottling.

Obviously, *Virgin* seems to have collided with the giant zakai. What is left of the wreckage should be inside the zakai's body. The only way to get to *Virgin* is to mount an expedition *inside* the creature.

The zakai's body is composed of a collection of "gas bags," which keep it aloft. A porous, connective tissue (not unlike a terrestrial sponge) joins all the bags together. The passages in this material are large enough to allow humans to enter.

Action: By far, the best way over to the creature will be for the players to use grav belts. This gives them maneuverability while transferring between the ship and the zakai, and it negates much of the potentially debilitating effects of the gas giant's strong gravity (1.5 gees).

As the PCs cross the gap between their ship and the zakai, they are buzzed by the winged aerial forms, though none will attack or collide with them. Additionally, several other species float in the air using flotation bladders, like the zakai only far smaller (0.5-1.5 meters diameter). Gaining purchase on one of the largest nearby cavities, the PCs can begin to enter the creature's body.

Library Data: Zakai

The zakai are a large, airborne species native to the gas giant Jadan in the Dywosik system. Discovered by the IISS in 1010, the zakai have yet to be extensively studied. From what has been observed to date, they show no sign of any thought processes above basic animal instinct.

Looking rather like a collection of odd-sized balloons embedded in a matrix of tissue, the zakai maintains its buoyancy with clusters of hydrogen-filled flotation bladders. The coloration is yellow-green, with darker green or brown mottling. A stabilization keel of rope-like tendrils extends from the creature's ventral surface.

Details of the zakai's "diet" are not known. It is presumed that the body tissues may perform some kind of photosynthesis process, but other sources may supplement the creature's nutrient input.

Zakai seem to travel in herds of 10 to 70 members. The observed variation in size between specimens is 75 to 1000 meters. Detailed analyses on sexual anatomical variation and reproduction have yet to be undertaken. The zakai are only part of the larger biosphere present in Jadan's atmosphere. Wilderness refuelling here is restricted by an IISS order. Orbital navigation satellites broadcast the refueling ban.

The surrounding tissue is soft and spongy. If the players do not have grav belts, they will fall through the material several times — sometimes falling all the way into the next cavity below. As the players travel deeper into the body, it becomes darker and the use of lighting equipment becomes necessary.

To simulate the players' route through these twisting cavities in search of the hull of *Virgin*, use the following task:

To find your way to *Virgin* through the zakai body cavities:
Difficult, Int, (varies)
Referee: If the task succeeds, the players are able to find their way to the next cavity. If the task fails, then the players find they're at a dead end and must backtrack to a previous chamber.

On an *exceptional success,* they come into contact with *Virgin's* hull. The hull will have a gaping hole at that point to allow entry, though the twisted metal should be navigated with care, as it could produce a suit tear.

Many of the interior cavities will be inhabited by parasites (see cover illustration). These creatures feed off the leaking gases and fluids of the zakai. The parasites go through two major growth stages, larval and adult. In the larval phase, the newborn parasites inflate flotation bladders which enable them to travel to another member in the zakai herd. This ensures a good genetic blend.

The adult stage stays within the zakai and feeds off materials leaking from the larger alien's flotation bladders. Additionally, they prey on some of the smaller aerial life forms which may venture inside the zakai. When the PCs enter a new chamber, they will encounter 3D–6 adults and 1Dx100 juveniles. The juveniles present no danger whatsoever — aside from covering the floors and walls, making it sometimes difficult to maneuver.

With adults, it should be rolled to see if they attack. If they do decide to pounce on the PCs, they will do no real damage, as their soft teeth are designed for tearing at less dense tissue. However, they could leap on the players in swarms, presenting quite an annoyance. Plus, if your players have seen the movie "Alien", their paranoia may get the best of them.

The adults are attacking primarily in defense of their young. If a cavity is generated that contains no juveniles, no attack roll should be made on behalf of the adults. Another annoying factor is a sticky, honey-like fluid which covers the floor in many chambers. It is an accumulation of waste product formed by the parasites. This waste is slowly absorbed by the zakai and provides a percentage of the creature's nutritional intake.

If the PCs think to take a sample of this fluid with them for analysis, they may make a profitable discovery. At low temperatures (below -50 C), the substance becomes extremely slippery and makes a fantastic low-temperature lubricant.

The statistics for the two-stages of parasites are as follows:

Flying Reducer (juvenile)	1 kg	4/2	none	0	none	A0 F7 S1
Pouncer-Reducer (adult)	3 kg	7/2	jack	1	teeth	A5 F7 S2

6. THE WOLF STRIKES

A Vargr corsair which was lurking in the atmosphere attacks the PCs ship.
Location: In the players' ship, parked either in Jadan's upper atmosphere or in orbit.

Scene: You are listening to the running communications from the party venturing into the zakai when your computer alerts you to a radar contact.

As more detailed sensor information becomes available, your computer projects a 90% probability that the closing ship is a *Ueknou*-class Vargr corsair. The ship, acting as a commerce raider, must have been lurking under the veil of Jadan's stormy clouds, waiting for an opportunity to pounce.

As the realization that you're under attack strikes home, the computer announces a missile launch directed at your ship.

Action: This nugget is particularly effective if your playing group has split into two parties — one searching out *Virgin's* wreck, the other staying aboard the mothership. If all the players are with the expedition inside the zakai, this nugget may be played to add an air of danger. If their ship is destroyed, they could be captured by the Vargr or stranded in the atmosphere of Jadan, depending on the circumstances.

If the players' ship remained in orbit while a party travelled down to the zakai herd, their ship will have the advantage of being in the high guard position as the corsair attacks. The ship statistics are given in the box, *Ueknou-class Vargr corsair.*

7. IN THE WRECK

Having worked their way to *Virgin's* wreckage, the PCs search for the Naasirka data files they were sent to retrieve.
Location: The wreck of *Enterprising Virgin.*

Scene: You're finally within *Virgin's* shattered remains. The interior is a jumbled mess. The impact buckled the hull in many places and scattered unsecured items all over the decks.

It appears that the inertial compensators were not working when *Virgin* collided with the zakai. *Virgin's* floors are slick with dripping zakai body fluids trickling in through the ruptured hull.

Travelling to the bridge, you find the crew. Both are dead. Examination will reveal that one seems to have died on impact. The other crewmember apparently survived the crash, but was seriously wounded and eventually ran out of air in her suit.

There is no operating power in the ship. The ship's flight recorder is still intact, if you wish to take it along. You must now sift through the scattered remains of the craft in order to find the Naasirka cargo. As you move in the ship, you can feel it lurching slightly within the surrounding tissue.

Action: The Naasirka files were in a special, briefcase-sized carrying case. Naturally, the first place for the PCs to start looking would be the cargo area. However, when they arrive there, they find a tremendous mess.

In order to maximize profits on the RVE-to-Domain run, *Virgin's* crew was carrying a full cargo load. Goods of all kinds are scattered about the bay. Some large cargo containers have split open, spilling their contents of perishables (now rotting) throughout the space.

In short, the area looks like a garbage dump.

To sift through the cargo bay and find the Naasirka files:
Routine, Str, 1 hr (unskilled OK)
Referee: This task simply involves a lot of grunt work — require exceptional success before the Naasirka files are located. In the process of searching, the players may come across other items of interest. By the laws of salvage, they can keep anything they find in the wreck — though most delicate items were destroyed during the crash.

When they find the Naasirka case, it will be fully intact, though the outside will be smeared by rotting foodstuffs.

Be sure to add a few noticeable shudderings of the ship as they make their way through the craft. These movements are due to motions in the surrounding tissue.

The ship is in an unstable location within the beast and is in danger of pressing too deeply on one of the creature's larger flotation bladders. When this happens (as it does

in **Nugget 9: Fatal Wound**), the creature will sustain more damage to its already aggravated internal injuries and will start to lose buoyancy. Though the PCs are not solely responsible for this action, their presence is helping to accelerate the process.

It is unlikely the PCs will have the equipment on board their ship necessary to analyze the flight recorder's log. This will probably have to wait until they return to Domain space. However, if they are present when the recorder is read, they will find out the following tale of how *Enterprising Virgin* came to its bizarre end.

Virgin entered the Dywosik system and, naturally enough, headed to Jadan to refuel. Just as they began their refueling dive, they were hit by an attack from a Vargr corsair. A proximity explosion from a missile damaged *Virgin's* avionics and inertial dampeners.

Instead of completing its swing through the atmosphere of the giant, *Virgin's* captain decided to brake and try to hide in the Jadan's cloud decks while effecting repairs. The ship had shed most of its velocity and was cruising through Jadan's night time sky when it stumbled into the zakai herd. *Virgin's* crew wasn't expecting to find any solid matter floating in the clouds. They slammed into a large herd member at about 120 kph.

Without inertial compensators soaking up the energy, the crash was a disaster. The captain was killed on impact, the navigator survived (but not long), and the ship was damaged beyond repair.

8. FATAL WOUND

While the PCs are still inside of it, the massive zakai succumbs to its wounds and begins a death dive towards Jadan's interior.

Location: Inside a dying zakai.

Scene: Finally! You've found the Naasirka files and the job is completed — technically. Suddenly, the ship lurches harder than before and you hear what sounds like a muffled explosion. After a minute, your radios erupt with an urgent message from your ship waiting outside the zakai.

"You're going down! Get out of there! I repeat, the zakai is losing altitude. You're dropping — get out fast!"

Action: *Virgin* has finally slipped into the nearby flotation bladder and caused it to lose pressure. This, combined with the fact that the zakai has finally succumbed to the wound it received during its collision with *Virgin*, is causing the altitude drop. Its flotation bladders are losing pressure and going down on its final "death dive". The timing of the creature's demise couldn't be any worse.

With the current rate of descent towards Jadan's hellish interior, the players have about 10 minutes to get out before the pressure becomes too much for their their suits to handle.

9. RECOVERY!

The data files recovered, the PCs head back toward Domain space.

Location: The PCs' ship.

Scene: With the data recovered, you return to Gabrael. After landing, news circulates quickly in the starport of your adventure. You all become sort of "local celebrities of the week."

Action: Henjeri will be overjoyed to see the PCs return. She, and her new son, will greet the players as they touch down on Gabrael.

Returning to the Dreyla Standard System's offices, the players find that she's arranged a small party for their benefit. The small crowd there will listen to any of the players' tales with rapt attention.

Naturally, she cuts them a check for the promised amount. Not only will they have augmented their bank account, but they will have improved their reputation as a reliable starmerc outfit. This could open doors to further profitable adventure possibilities in the future.

This nugget pulls a fast forward, putting the players back at their starting location. However, it's likely that your players will want to role-play the journey back, as recovering the data really only marks the halfway point of their trip.

It's largely up to the referee to detail this section (lest this adventure take up an entire issue!), but here are a few suggestions for spicing up the long haul back to Gabrael.

If the *Hoplite's* ship was not destroyed in a crash, you could have them run into Kingsley's crew, either in space or on a planet. Certainly, if you want to have them bump into the *Hoplites* at a starport tavern, you'll have a classic barroom brawl on your hands.

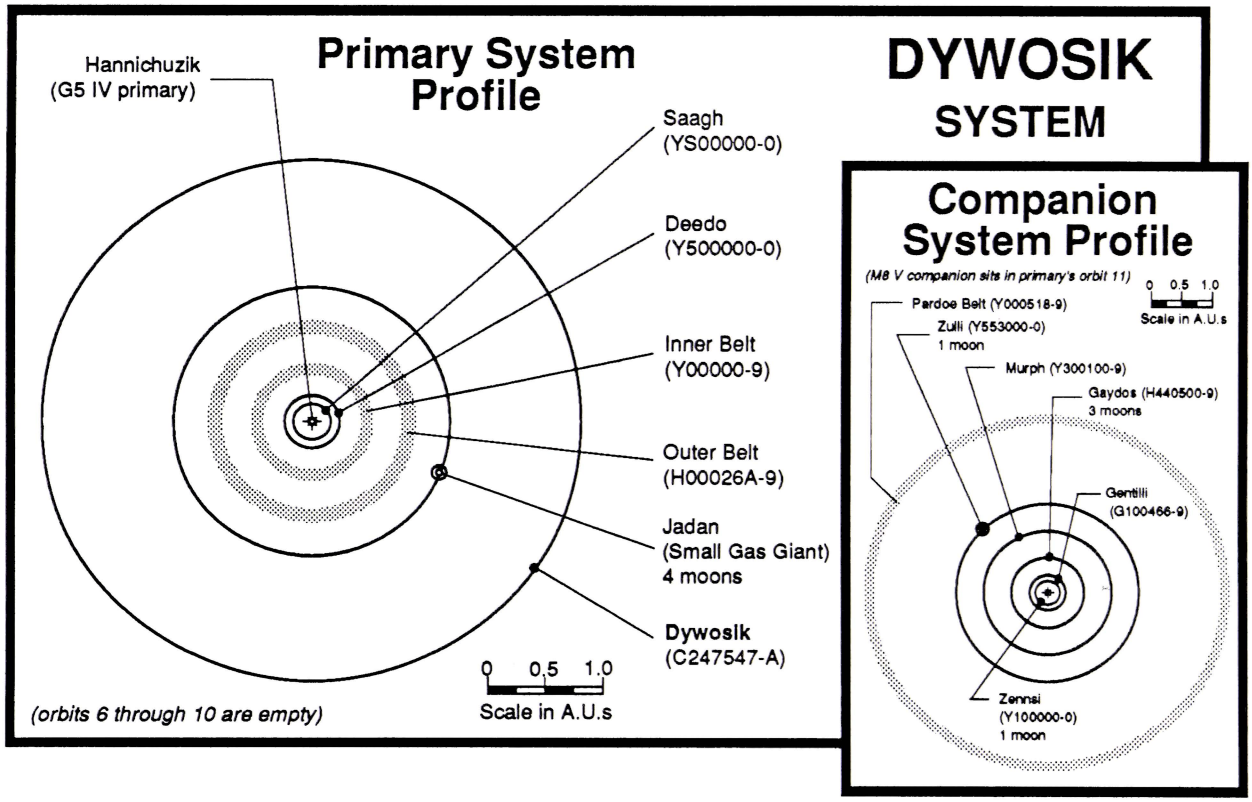
Another possible campaign thread that can be woven in is to have the PCs stumble across some evidence of a plot against Dreyla Standard Systems. Through some means, they find evidence that points to a rival company cutting a deal with Vargr sources to *arrange* the interception of *Virgin*. That same company may be setting a trap to snare the PCs before they can return to Gabrael with the data.

The possibilities abound.

Ueknou-class Vargr Corsair

CraftID: Vargr Corsair, Type VP, TL 14, MCr193.403
Hull: 360/900, Disp=400, Config=1SL, Armor=40G, Unloaded=3868 tons, Loaded=4832 tons
Power: 31/62, Fusion=4158Mw, Duration=25/75
Loco: 29/58, Maneuver=3, 11/22, Jump=2, NOE=180kph, Cruise=750kph, Top=1000kph, Agility=0
Commo: Radio=System
Sensors: PassiveEMS=Interstellar, Active EMS=FarOrbit, Densitometer=HiPen/250m, Neutrino=10kw, ActObjScan=Routine, ActObjPin=Routine, PasObjScan=Routine, PasObjPin=Routine, PasEngScan=Simple, PasEngPin=Routine
Off: Missiles=x04
Batt 1
Bear 1
BeamLaser=x05
Batt 1
Bear 1
Def: DefDM=+4
Control: Computer=3, Panel=holodynamic link x 152, Special=heads-up holo x 5, Environ=basic env, basic ls, extend ls, grav plates, intertial comp
Accomm: Crew=3 x 4 (Bridge=2, Engineer=3, Gunnery=6, Command=1), Staterooms=12, EmergLow=5, SubCraft=GCarrier
Other: Cargo=810kl, Fuel=2196kl, Scoops, ObjSize=Average, EmLevel=Faint

The *Ueknou*-class Vargr corsair is an armed vessel equipped with extra accommodations for ship's troops. It is commonly used by a variety of Vargr factions for commerce raiding activities and picket duty.



SOLOMANI & ASLAN

The Aslan: a fierce warrior race steeped in tradition and ritual. *The Solomani:* once the human masters of Charted Space, they have since been crushed under the heel of the mighty Third Imperium. But with the Imperial Rebellion comes new hope of interstellar glory — for both races.

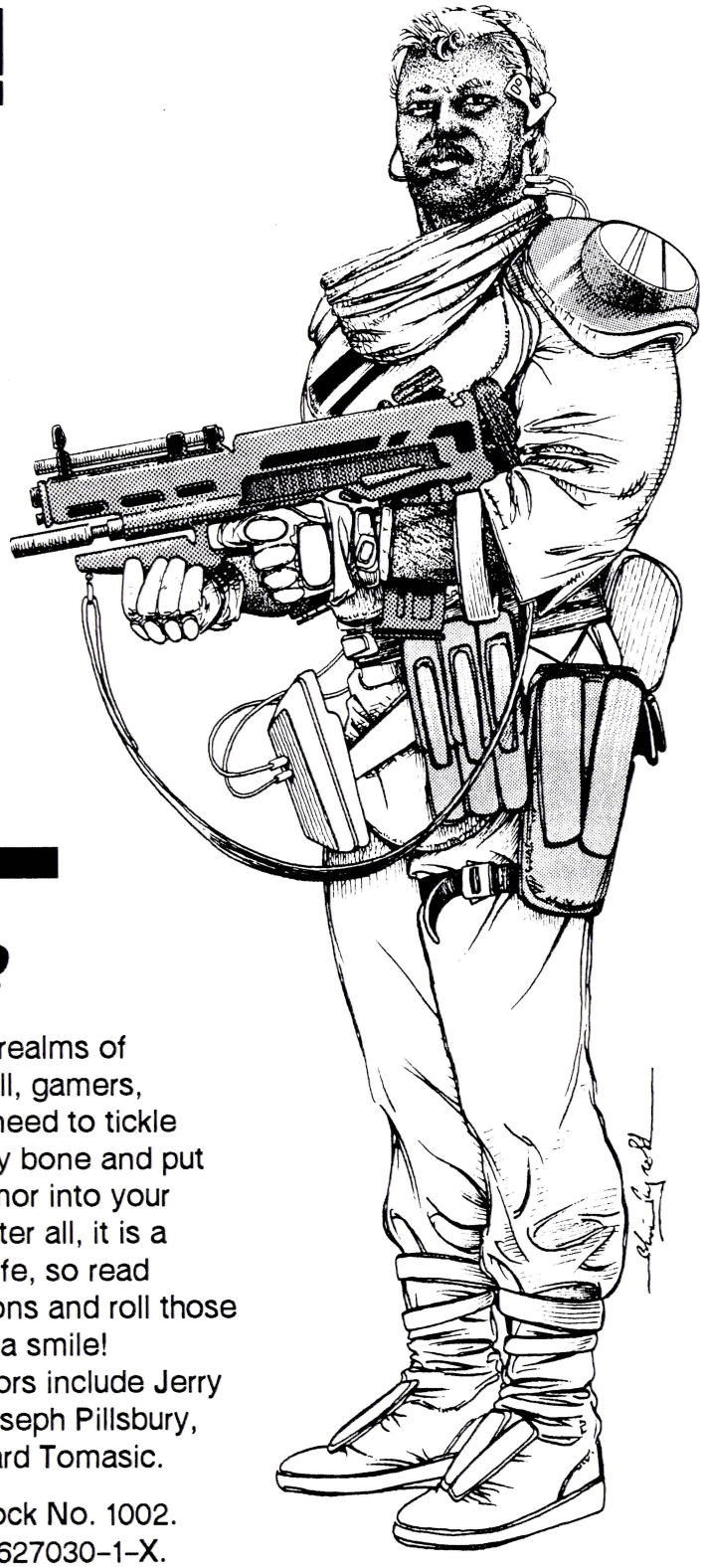
The second volume in the **MegaTraveller** alien series, *Solomani and Aslan* examines two of the most powerful and intriguing Rimward races. Loaded with the kind of detail you've come to expect from Digest Group, this book explores all aspects of culture and technology with deckplans, starmaps, technical drawings, and loads of illustrations.

Don't miss this opportunity to immerse yourself into the rich background of the most detailed science fiction role-playing game available. 104 pages. $12.95. Available 3rd quarter '91. Please no pre-orders.

Digest Group Publications

515 Willow, Woodburn, OR 97071
Voice or FAX: (503) 981-4752

Hey, look at what we've got for you!



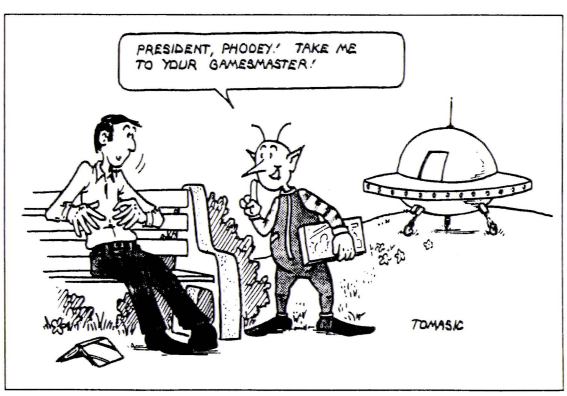
HEROES OF YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

A collection of full-page drawings of both fantasy and science fiction characters, useful as both player and non-player characters in roleplaying. Roleplayers like to know what their characters look like. This is a book you can browse through and say, "That's me — that's my character!" Contributors include some of your favorite industry artists, including Rob Caswell, Liz Danforth, David Deitrich, Blair Reynolds, and Richard Tomasic. Available in July.

$7.95. Stock No. 1003. ISBN 0-9627030-2-8.

It's A Gamer's Life

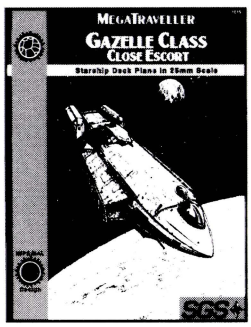
Gamers know that journeying in the vast and varied realms of the adventure gaming hobby gets pretty serious. Well, gamers, this hilarious collection of cartoons is just what you need to tickle your funny bone and put some humor into your hobby. After all, it is a gamer's life, so read these 'toons and roll those dice with a smile! Contributors include Jerry Fuchs, Joseph Pillsbury, and Richard Tomasic.



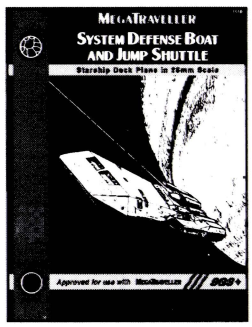
$5.50. Stock No. 1002. ISBN 0-9627030-1-X.

Ask your local dealer for these fine books or order direct from the publisher:
StarLance Publications, 50 Basin Drive, Mesa Washington 99343
Include $1.50 per order for P & H. Washington residents include 7.5% sales tax.

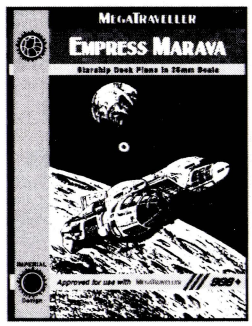
MEGATRAVELLER™



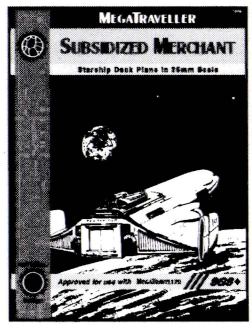
#1015 - $11.95
Gazelle-Close Escort



#1016 - $11.95
SDB & Jump Shuttle



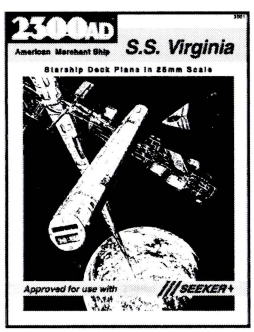
#1017 - $11.95
Empress Marava



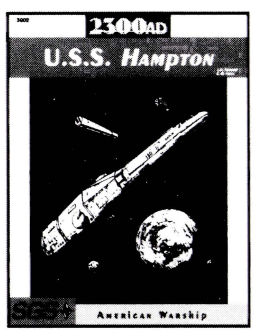
#1019 - $11.95
Subsidized Merchant

Add some Excitement to your Gaming Adventures with Detailed Starship Deck Plans in 25mm scale

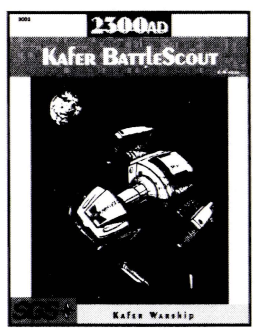
STARSHIP DECK PLANS FOR 2300AD™ AVAILABLE IN 25MM SCALE



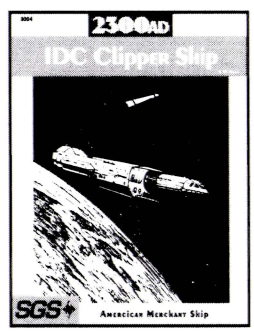
#3001 - $11.95
S.S. *Virginia*



#3002 - $11.95
U.S.S. *Hampton*

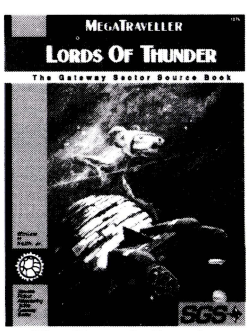


#3003 - June 91
Kafer BattleScout

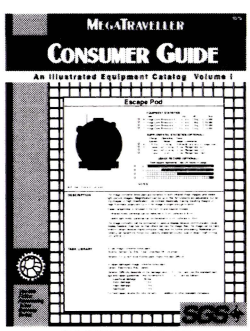


#3004 - Dec 91
IDC Clipper Ship

MEGATRAVELLER
Look for these New Releases coming soon!



The Storm is Brewing in the Gateway Sector . . .



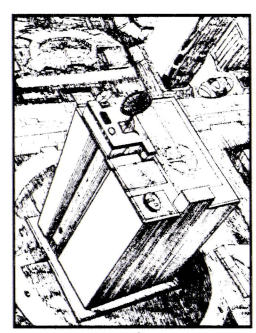
#1080 - $11.95
Consumer Guide Volume. I

New! Terrain Maps and Building Plans Detailed in 25mm scale from SGS

Hex-A-Tile™
Woodlands Terrain Map
in 25mm scale

Look for this Logo
Available in April

#151 - $12.95
Hex-A-Tile™ : Woodlands



#101 - $11.95
Corporation Building
from the Building Complex Series

MasterCard VISA

Ask your local dealer for these products or order direct.
P/H $3.00 for U.S./Canada.
Overseas $6 U.S.
Send for your **FREE** catalog today.

SGS

SEEKER GAMING SYSTEMS
P.O. Box 519
Mtn. Home, ID. 83647-0519
Voice/FAX Line (208) 587-2986

ARABELLA VON ERICSSON

DENEB DOSSIERS: *By Gam Tate-Mukhadashuu of the Mora World Review*

All the heads turned as she entered the restaurant. Looking terribly out of place wearing her well-worn, patch-laden ship's jumper, she swaggered over to my table and thrust out her hand in a boisterous welcome. Living constantly "on the edge" has given this woman a gruff bravado that makes her stand out in any civilized crowd...

With the pervasive media image of the frontier starmerc rolling through my mind, this is how I thought I'd be opening my interview with starmerc commander Baroness Arabella von Ericsson. However, Ericsson's entrance shattered all my holo-vid-enriched expectations. I was half-wondering if I was in the right restaurant when the tall, smartly-dressed, auburn-haired woman in a business suit approached my table and asked if I'd been waiting long.

Baroness Arabella von Ericsson commands the *Roc's Talons*, one of the largest and most well-known starmerc organizations in the Domain. Her para-military achievements, attractive looks, and outspoken nature have made her one of the most popular para-military personalities in the Domain news media. In its brief history her unit has grown from four to over twenty starships and gained a formidable reputation on both sides of the Imperial border.

Primarily operating from the coreward and trailing edges of Deneb sector, the *Talons* have taken heavy beatings while turning back many Vargr raids in recent years. However, both the morale and equipment of the *Talons* remains in fighting trim. Much of the *Talons'* success can be attributed to the qualities of its leader. The Baroness is a dedicated professional and demanding commander who leads by example. She can be brutally frank with her opinions, although an earthy sense of humor usually softens her tone. Arabella cares deeply for the people she leads and considers them an extended family.

HONOR AND LOYALTY

Ericsson has a Sword World lineage steeped in family military tradition. In 848, after the fall of the Trilateral Alliance, her ancestors moved to Jewell where they joined the melting pot of Imperial society. "Our family has always been proud to serve in the Imperial services. Maybe it's due to some sense of debt to what Imperial society has done for us? My father, Sir Richard Ericsson, joined the Imperial navy without consideration of any alternate course of action. As an Ericsson, he knew it was his duty," related the Baroness. "In the Fourth Frontier War, he was knighted for his actions in combat.

"As I came of age, I went through a period of soul-searching. I knew I was expected to join the navy, but I had other interests competing for priority. A good friend of mine who was active in the art community was pulling strings to get me a position at the Stenvarrin Museum of Art History. I was torn.

"My father was in poor health at the time, bed-ridden by the blood disease that ultimately took his life. I knew he'd be hurt if I didn't follow his wishes — and being the oldest of three children didn't help matters any. I was really put in the spotlight. So, the navy won my commitment, though I still do have a great interest in art. Mostly three-dimensional stuff by Vargr and Zhodani artisans."

She graduated from the Imperial Naval Academy in 1082, fifth in her class and with honors, a source of great pride to her and her family. It was during her Academy days that Arabella's tactical skills were first noted. Several of her simulator records remain unbroken and her test scores were among the highest in history. This contributed to her rapid climb through the naval ranks.

By the advent of the Fifth Frontier War, she was a Commodore, in charge of a fast cruiser squadron under Admiral Elphistone.

INTO THE FRAY

One aspect that characterized Ericsson's service years was her fascination with and knowledge of the Vargr. "I found myself just being drawn into studying Vargr cultures. Maybe the initial push came from the fact that my brother owned a terran dog?

"I've never let down my guard around them, though. You've always got to show them a strong set of teeth, or they'll walk all over you."

Her peacetime routine was interrupted by the beginning of the Fifth Frontier War. In one early clash the Vargr ambushed the light cruiser *Pride of Mora*, killing all aboard. Among the casualties was Karl Ericsson, First Officer and Arabella's youngest brother. News of his death visibly changed Commodore Ericsson and her attitude toward the Vargr.

"At first, Karl's death didn't make any sense to me. I knew the Vargr. I'd stood face-to-face them. How could this happen? When it finally sunk in, my approach to the Vargr had changed. They were undeniably the enemy. I felt that — knew that, without reservation. It was certainly a driving force, though I've tempered my attitudes since.

"I took my squadron up against the Vargr time and time again during the war. We racked up a good string of successes — and we were lucky. I was driven by Karl's death. I can see that much more clearly, in hindsight. But I don't think my drive ever made me *too* reckless. At least not to the point of endangering those in my command. I think the naval high command needed to be shown, by example, how to deal with Vargr aggression. The tactics they were employing were rather soft and antiquated.

"Our reputation finally caught up to us when they pinned the nickname the *Avenging Rocs* on my squadron. I guess we'd earned it."

CLIMBING THE LADDER

In fleet actions at Heya and in detached operations hunting down Vargr stragglers, Commodore Ericsson displayed both outstanding tactical finesse and courage under fire, behavior that was noticed in the highest circles. Recognizing these accomplishments, the Duke of Regina awarded her the Medal for Conspicuous Gallantry and a promotion to Fleet Admiral.

For past services, Duke Norris granted Commodore Ericsson the fief of Delcambre on Vincennes and the title of Baroness that went with it, and as a final reward he requested her services as his Naval Attache.

"I began my duties as the Archduke's (Norris') Naval Attache shortly after my father's death. I guess that's why I waded into Imperial high society with such a vengeance," says Ericsson with a smirk. "It was a good position and allowed me to make a lot of high-level contacts. Without that experience, I doubt the *Talons* would be where we are today.

"With his coming from a background in Naval Intelligence, the Archduke and I got along quite well. I think there was a good sense of trust and understanding from both sides. His seneschal was another matter. Dilgaadin was constantly harping on me for my 'brash and ill-timed public statements.'

Having to deal with that man was the only thing I didn't miss when leaving the position. He exemplifies the inefficient bureaucrat — too concerned with political rhetoric and afraid of really attacking an issue."

THE ROCS TAKE FLIGHT

In early 1113, Ericsson announced her retirement from active duty and desire to form a starmerc organization. When questioned about her motives for returning to the field, Arabella quipped, "Like the old dog, I'm too old to learn new tricks and might as well make a profit while performing the ones I know."

Resurrecting the nickname of her old cruiser squadron, she named the new unit the *"Roc's Talons"* and began recruiting personnel in late 1113.

Arabella von Ericsson/Ex-Navy Fleet Admiral (Retired)
596ACC Apparent Age: 42 Actual Age: 60 Terms: 10
Funds: Unlimited for most purposes. Personal credit at any one time is generally limited to Cr100,000.
Leader-4, Fleet Tactics-4, Ship Tactics-3, Gambling-2, Handgun-2, Liaison-2, Carousing-1, Computer-1, Linguistics-1 (Vargr), Pilot-1, Vacc Suit-1, Zero-G Environment-0, History-0.
Awards and Decorations: Naval Academy Honors Graduate, MCUF-4, MCG-2, and Purple Heart-2.
Born: 311-1060
Homeworld: Jewell/Jewell/Spinward Marches
Position: Starmerc Commander

The *Eagle's Talons* began operation in 1114, following six months of training and shake-down cruises. Ship assets consisted of a *Lurushaar Kilaalum*-class patrol cruiser, two *Gazelle*-class close escorts, and an armed far trader. Using her connections, Arabella negotiated a contract with Oberlindes Lines to rid the Aramis and Regina subsectors of Vargr stragglers that had been plaguing the merchant line since the end of the Fifth Frontier War.

"There's no doubt it was the Oberlindes ticket that put us on the map. The company wanted us to attack the bases these Vargr were operating from and put them out of business. We did that, and took out most of their ships. It was basically a rout. Of course, Oberlindes was pretty impressed with the operation. We ended up with a substantial bonus allowing us to expand our small fleet."

Since then, the *Talons* have grown in size and reputation. Operations have expanded to include the entire coreward boundary of the Domain, with the main base of operations being the coreward border of Deneb Sector.

The unit became notorious among both human pirates and Vargr corsairs for relishing a good fight and ruthlessly hunting down their opponents. As their reputation spread, the *Talons* found that their mere presence scared off all but the most tenacious raiders. The combat damage and losses of the

unit were extensive but the payoff in reputation and fulfilled contracts was worth it.

Corsairs began to shy away from convoys the *Talons* escorted and systems they protected.

BEHIND EVERY GOOD STARMERC...

The *Talons* are somewhat of a family business, with Ericsson's husband, Garmukir Kugaii, helming many of the unit's administrative responsibilities. Kugaii also comes from a naval background, where he met Ericsson while he was serving as Elphistone's Fleet Logistics officer. "I'm sure glad I we put in the effort to get over our first encounter," Ericsson reflects about meeting her husband.

"We met at a staff briefing in which Garm criticized me for questionable resupply methods. It degenerated into a shouting match in which I accused Garm of being a 'spineless, bureaucratic paper pusher,' then stormed out of the conference room.

"Garm ran into me later — though I'm still not convinced it was an unplanned encounter. He apologized for his accusations, without retracting any of them — he's sly that way — and offered to make it up to me over dinner in one of the finest orbital restaurants in the subsector. His efforts at damage control seemed to work remarkably well...," Ericsson says with a sly grin.

Officers and enlisted alike were surprised at the attraction between the tall, dynamic Ericsson and the short, unassuming Kugaii. What they missed was his strength of conviction and efficient way of getting things done, qualities that impressed Arabella despite their initial confrontation.

HOLDING THE LINE

Currently, the *Talons* field twenty-two starships. Five *Fiery* gunned escorts are based at Dunmag, five *Lurushaar Kilaalum* patrol cruisers at Antra, and an additional five patrol cruisers at Lamas. Four *Gazelle* close escorts and a pair of *Rapier* (ED-15) escort destroyers serve as a floating reserve. The Baroness' flagship is the *Argent Rage*, a "surplus" *Kishakhaniir*-class (CJ-15) cruiser which she managed to obtain with the help of Archduke Norris.

The Baroness is coordinating defense of their operational area with local officials and Domain naval commanders, lending assistance to convoys where possible. Future operations of the *Talons* depend greatly on what the Vargr do next.

Before we had to break up our talk in order for the Baroness to make a business appointment, I asked her what she does in the unlikely event that she finds some free time on her hands.

"I like to relax with friends and indulge my fondness for games of chance by playing a cutthroat game of poker. I can recoup an amount of paid-out bonus money from my officers that way," Ericsson says with a sparkle in her eye.

Her other hobbies include Ja-kaat (a game like Zero-G handball), target shooting with handguns, and collecting works of Vargr and Zhodani art. The Baroness also has a life-long interest in the history of the Third Imperium and the career of Empress Arbellatra in particular, viewing her as a role model for all female naval officers.

When Tech Levels A through F aren't enough...

You don't have to travel to Vincennes to live like a civilized sophont. **G** is here – the technology store for those who demand the best from society.

Whether you're looking for the latest in bio-engineered pets, pseudo-reality recorders, or even that perfect robot valet using the latest in synaptic processing brains – **G** has it for you.

G's medical department is staffed by skilled personnel with a detailed understanding of cutting edge bio-sciences. Don't gamble on lower tech experimentation – we've got the anagathics that are right for you.

G even has a full line of personal transport vehicles. From grav belts to g-carriers, **G**'s selection lets you travel in style.

So visit your nearest **G** location. We bring the best of Imperial technology *to you.*

G stores are located on many tech level A+ worlds throughout the Domain. Items stocked may vary due to local trade or technology restrictions.

Q&A

OFFICIAL ANSWERS TO YOUR MEGATRAVELLER GAMING QUESTIONS

With issue 2 of the *Journal,* we once again see the return of **Q&A.** Several of you have sent in questions via handwritten letters (a few several pages in length). Unless your handwritting is *very* neat and readable, sending in a handwritten letter is not a good way to guarantee you'll ever get your questions answered. We get dozens of Q&A letters each week, and obviously, we can't answer all the questions we receive here in Q&A — we have to pick and chose.

If we have to decipher handwriting, you can guess where that letter will go — straight to the bottom of the pile. With the availability of computers and typewriters these days, even if you don't own a computer or typewriter, you certainly must know someone who does. Improve your odds of getting your question answered: type it up before you send it in.

Also, as a reminder, we do not have the time or the resources to answer Q&A letters directly. If you are desperate, phrase your question as a yes-no or multiple-choice question, and include a return postcard with a place for us to mark the answer and just drop it in the mail. Questions sent in using this technique often get mailed back the same day we receive them.

It appears from the MegaTraveller rules about jump duration that ships which jump to the same destination will arrive at different times over a two day period. How then do you conduct a coordinated surprise attack on a star system if it takes a couple of days for all your ships to arrive? This has major implications for convoy, military, and other multi-ship operations. — *C.B.*

Good question! You have discovered what amounts to a "hole" in the rules — a hole that needs filled. These types of problems are the most fun to solve because we need to come up with an answer that does not conflict with prior **Traveller** material. (Contrary to what some of you may think, we haven't thought of *all* the implications of *everything!)* At any rate, after discussing this problem with Marc Miller, we offer the following solution.

When a group of starships know they have to arrive in unison, they elect to spend significantly more time at the start computing and sharing jump vector computations. This leads to a much more accurate jump exit at the other end, with the error dropping significantly.

The formula in the *Starship Operator's Manual* for normal jumpspace exit is:

124 hrs + (2D x 6 hrs)
yielding a result of 136 - 196 hours
(that is, 5.7 to 8.2 days)

If double the jump preparation time is spent with all the affected ships in computer link via tight beam communication, use the following formula instead:

167 hours + (2D x 0.1 hr)
yielding a result of 167.2 - 168.2 hours.

Most ships now arrive within *minutes* of each other, with the worst spread being up to 60 minutes apart (and this only happens in about 1 out of 20 jumps). Considering the vast distances found in a star system, starships arriving minutes apart would not spoil a surprise arrival.

Constant communication during the jump vector generate is essential for this to work, and *double* the normal vector generation time must be observed. But when getting there "on a dime" timewise is essential, then this technique is the key. Most civilian vessels don't need this level of schedule precision, so they don't bother. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

Why does the planetoid belt table in the *Referee's Manual* on page 28, step 23 show a result of 13 if there is no DM? — *N.P.*

There is supposed to be a +DM on the roll for the number of gas giants in the system. This was accidentally omitted. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

In the *Players' Manual,* psionic tasks each have a time increment. Does the time increment mean how long the effects of the psionics last, or to how long it takes before the task takes effect? — *S.G.*

Since psionic effects start immediately, the time increment indicates how long the immediate psionic effects last *and* how long the one doing the psionics must concentrate on keeping the psionic task "in operation." Remember the time increment must be multiplied by a roll of 3D to get the actual duration of the task.

For instance, the *Players' Manual* lists a "read surface thoughts" task, which is given below.

To read surface thoughts:
Difficult, Telepathy, Int, 6 sec (uncertain)

After trying the task and succeeding, the player rolls 3D for the duration and gets 9. The "mind reading" effort lasted 54 seconds (6 sec x 9), during which time the character was concentrating on the mind reading effort. In most cases, this time duration is not relevant and you can ignore it. But once in a while, knowing the time duration of a psionics task does become important.

During indoor combat is an instance when the duration of a psionics task *does matter.* In the above example, the player character would have to stay out of the combat for 9 rounds, hiding behind cover, concentrating on the read surface thoughts task all the while. If interrupted before completing the task, the partial information gained should be highly suspect, if given at all.

As a rule of thumb, I'd say if the task was less than half done, it failed, with no information given. If more than half done, I would give the PCs some information, but inform them the information was guaranteed to be a *some truth* result — something about the information they did get was faulty. But each referee needs to decide for themselves how

they want to handle a failed psionic task. This just happens to be how *I* would handle it.

One final thought on psionic task duration. Since a roll of 3D is often around 10, the read surface thoughts task is designed to be an average of 60 seconds duration. Reading surface thoughts one time will not net you a "complete mental transcript of this morning's conversation with the mob boss," for instance. Sixty seconds of information is not that much.

When running a psionics task, I always remind the players how brief the results of a psionic task can be. This helps take the "god-like" power out of psionics and makes their use by the players a more delightful and challenging exercise. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

On page 74, step 18 of the *Referee's Manual,* is the TL column of the missile table missing? — *M.I.*

Yes, the tech level column is missing. The missile tech levels are:

TL	Missile type
6	Standard HE
7	Nuclear
16	Antimatter

While there are other places in the rules you could derive these tech levels, we should have included them in the table, too. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

When characters receive a ship as a mustering out benefit, can they sell the ship and take the money instead? — *D.D.*

This question is a good illustration of how you can reason out the answer to these kinds of questions by looking at a twentieth-century analogy. In this case, let's consider what might happen if the characters got a new automobile upon mustering out, instead of a starship. Could they sell it for the money instead of keeping it?

In most instances, the characters do not own the vehicle outright — the bank owns it and they owe payments on it. So to set up the analogy, if someone "gives" you a car that you owe payments on, can you sell it and take the money instead?

The car will now be used (even if it's only a month old), and will not sell for its full price. Then, you'll have to pay off the bank loan out of the proceeds of the sale. If you can negotiate a good deal, you might get lucky and have enough money to pay the bank. Otherwise, selling the car will leave you in a fix because what you sell the car for won't cover the bank loan balance.

So it is with the starship. If the player characters (PCs) owe the bank for the starship, they probably won't be able to sell the ship for enough to cover the loan balance, unless they are within a few payments of paying the ship off. However, character generation does say that every time the ship benefit is rolled again, the PCs get ten years worth of payments knocked off the 40 year loan.

If the PCs get lucky enough to own the ship free and clear — *then, and only then* could they sell the starship and keep the money. But we're talking about a 40-year old starship at this point, and it will be worth less than 25% of what it was when new.

If the players happen to be Scouts and receive a Scout Ship as the benefit, they are *borrowing* the ship for an extended period of time, they do not own it. If they sell the ship, the Scout Service will come after them and demand they either return the ship or pay for it.

If the players want to sell a starship they have gotten as a benefit, I would start the adventure at that point. They have to make contacts, try to negotiate the best price, and so on. If they are trying to sell a starship they do not own free and clear, then they will either become wanted criminals, or they will have to adventure to get enough money to pay off the ship completely, since they probably won't get enough from the sale of their used starship to pay off the bank.

I finds it always helps to compare **Traveller** situations back to a similar real-world example. If you do that, rather than finding your PCs' odd requests a pain, they are actually opportunities ripe with adventure. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

On page 76 of the *Referee's Manual,* what are the prices of Howitzer ammunition sizes 2cm HE, 4cm HE, and 2cm HEAP? On page 77, what are the prices of Hivel ammunition sizes 2cm HEAP and 4cm HEAP? — *A.G.*

The prices of this ammunition can be computed using the old *Striker* rules. For those of you who do not have access to *Striker,* here are the prices:

Howitzer...	2cm HE	Cr2
	4cm HE	Cr4
	2cm HEAP	Cr3
Hivel.....	2cm HEAP	Cr5
	4cm HEAP	Cr10

Sorry for the oversight. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

CONVENTIONS CONVENTIONS!

DRAGON CON
July12-14, 1991

Location is the Atlanta Hilton and Towers4.

Georgia's science fiction, fantasy, gaming, and comic convention for everyone! Plus many special guests like Mike Jittlov, costume contest, video room, Japanese animation room, audio listening room, folk singing, banquet, gaming, and art show.

For more information write to: Ed Kramer, Chairman, Box 47696, Atlanta, GA 30362. Telephone: (404) 921-7148.

In Travellers' Digest #13 it was stated that streamlined is like *High Guard's* partial-streamlined and airframe is like *High Guard's* streamlined. Most starships (including a type S Scout and Type R Subsidized Merchant) have configuration SL. Does this mean they cannot land on a planet with an atmosphere? — *J. W.*

While the new MegaTraveller terms of airframe (AF), streamlined (SL), and unstreamlined (USL) seemed clear at the time we devised them, it has become obvious there is still some confusion over these terms. Let's see if I can finally clear up the confusion.

From the MegaTraveller Errata (which you can get from us by sending a 9x12 inch (22cm x 30cm) self-addressed, envelope with three stamps), here are the definitions given for the various streamlining configurations:

Unstreamlined: No attempt has been made to streamline the hull. Many protrusions and irregularities exist which significantly increase the vessel's drag, making it *difficult or impossible to operate the craft in an atmosphere at a high rate of speed.*

Streamlined: Various cowlings and farings have been added to the hull to streamline it *for operation in an atmosphere,* although the streamlining is less than that provided by an airframe. This configuration is equivalent to the "partially streamlined" configuration found in *High Guard.*

Airframe: The hull has been designed *for high performance in an atmosphere.* In order to achieve such performance, exterior design has been a priority. This configuration is equivalent to the "streamlined" configuration found in *High Guard.*

The *Referee's Manual* says on page 58 under Streamlining:

Any ship of configuration 1 to 6 *(i.e., needle to dome/disk — Ed.),* regardless of streamlining, can land on a world with an atmosphere zero or one; for all other worlds, streamlining is required. Irregular structures and planetoids cannot land on any world.

And lastly, looking in *High Guard,* on page 22:

Streamlining refers to the ability of the ship to enter atmosphere (partial streamlining allows fuel skimming but prohibits entry into world atmospheres for the purpose of landing).

The unfortunate thing is the reference in the errata to *High Guard.* While the streamlined and airframe configurations are similar to the *High Guard* configurations partially streamlined and streamlined in some ways, they are also different — different enough that the reference to *High Guard* confuses things more than it helps. So strike the reference to *High Guard,* and just read the MegaTraveller definitions.

As a guideline, if there is a conflict with MegaTraveller rules and older classic Traveller stuff, MegaTraveller should supercede. The idea with MegaTraveller was to improve on Traveller, so when the rules conflict, go with MegaTraveller.

Before we leave this question, let's explain a bit more what we had in mind when we created these three types from the older two types.

Airframe indicates the configuration generates its own *lift* in an atmosphere. In other words, the craft could actually glide to a landing without power if it had to. Streamlined, on the other hand, means the craft's configuation does not provide much in the way of lift, separate from its power source (a helicopter is a good example of an SL configuration — take away its power and it will drop like a rock).

The SL configuration, does however allow for atmospheric flight at reasonable speeds, and thus does allow for landing on a world's surface. And unstreamlined craft cannot land on a world with an atmosphere value of 2 or greater, nor can an unstreamlined configuration skim a gas giant for fuel.

I hope this explanation beats the one we gave in the errata! — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

What would happen if a small starship attempted to jump while aboard a larger ship while it was still in jump space? — *D.W.*

This would be a clever trick if it would work. Years ago, Marc Miller wrote an article on Jumpspace for the old *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* (GDWs Traveller Magazine), issue number 24.

On page 36 of that issue, Marc writes:

"Some attempts have been made to launch starships into jump space from other starships [in jump space]; problems in properly matching drive fields, or even turning them on near other ships, has shown the technique is impractical at best, and probably impossible."

So no, it doesn't work to try to send a ship into jump space from another starship that is already in jump space.

Your question also brings to mind another related question, which Marc illudes to in his text above. What about jumping from inside or very near another starship that is *not* in jump space, but is in normal space?

I've actually had PCs attempt just such a thing in a game. In one such instance, they were inside an Xboat that was itself inside an Xboat Tender. They wanted to power up the jump grid and get out of there in a big hurry.

Here's how I handled it. I reasoned that they were within 10 diameters of the other ship's gravity well, even though the tender's gravity well was quite weak (since it's only a starship). Still, this means they automatically misjumped.

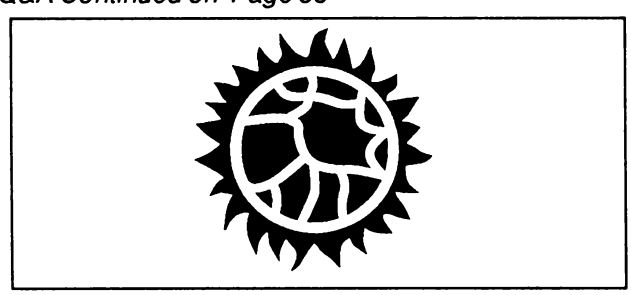
So there you have it — how to handle some rather bizarre jump entry situations. I wouldn't recommend your PCs try going into jump from another starship that's already in jump space — unless, of course, they are itching to roll up some new characters. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

The article in Digest 21 about low berths was unclear about the difference between cold- and chill berths. Could you please clarify the difference for me? — *B.L.*

Chill berths refrigerate or cool their occupants, slowing their metabolism, but not stopping it completely. Cold berths, on the other hand, freeze their occupants solid, completely suspending all metabolism.

It's no wonder PCs don't like to travel low berth when you realize it typically means cold berth travel. Somehow, the thought of getting frozen as hard as a rock doesn't seem an especially pleasant way to travel! If I had to travel this way, I'd prefer the chill berth myself. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

Q&A Continued on Page 55



FIERY CLASS GUNNED ESCORT

STARSHIP IN DETAIL: *By Rob Caswell, Mike Jackson, and Tom Peters*

A variant of the *Gazelle* class close escort, the *Fiery*-class gunned escort is a similarly common sight in the starlanes and battle fleets of the Shattered Imperium. Though originally designed for the fleet support role of escort to mid-size capital ships (like cruisers), the *Gazelle* and *Fiery* classes are at home in other niches as well. The *Fiery's* small size and flexibility has made it ideal in the roles of piracy suppression and merchant escort. Its speed has also made it useful as a naval courier.

Though the *Gazelle* is a more technically sophisticated and potentially "faster" ship (with its jump five capability when using drop tanks), the *Fiery,* with its streamlined hull, has more flexibility in it the roles it can undertake. This provides the ship with a tactical, rather than strategic advantage.

The waist turrets are triple mounts, each sporting three beam lasers. Residing in the chin are three missile launchers. Two fusion guns sit in the dorsal turret. This combination gives the *Fiery* a good punch at closer ranges, while not draining the ship's power systems to a degree that would greatly hamper maneuverability.

Though the *Fiery's* major components are tech level fourteen technology, many of its subsystems are actually tech level twelve or thirteen. This allows the *Fiery* easier access to needed repair parts, because there is a bigger pool of worlds which can supply its needs. This element is critical in the current Rebellion-era. Many worlds are finding it hard to maintain their high level of technology with the disruption and redistribution of interstellar trade.

Armament is another area where the *Fierys* excel over their siblings. Not only does the production model mount a wider array of weapons than its sister *Gazelle* class, but it offers easier maintenance and can be refueled from most avail-able sources. The *Fiery* entered service in 1088, three years after the *Gazelle.*

DESIGN ASPECTS

Using all its hardpoints, the *Fiery* mounts a total of four turrets: two outboard waist turrets, one on the chin, and the other perched atop the dorsal surface. Distributed in this way, the weapon mounts nearly cover a complete sphere, protecting the ship from most angles.

INTERIOR DETAILS

The *Fiery's* living and working spaces are split into two decks, referred to as the main and lower decks. There is a third "deck" above the main deck, but it serves only as fuel tankage (and is not shown on the accompanying deckplans).

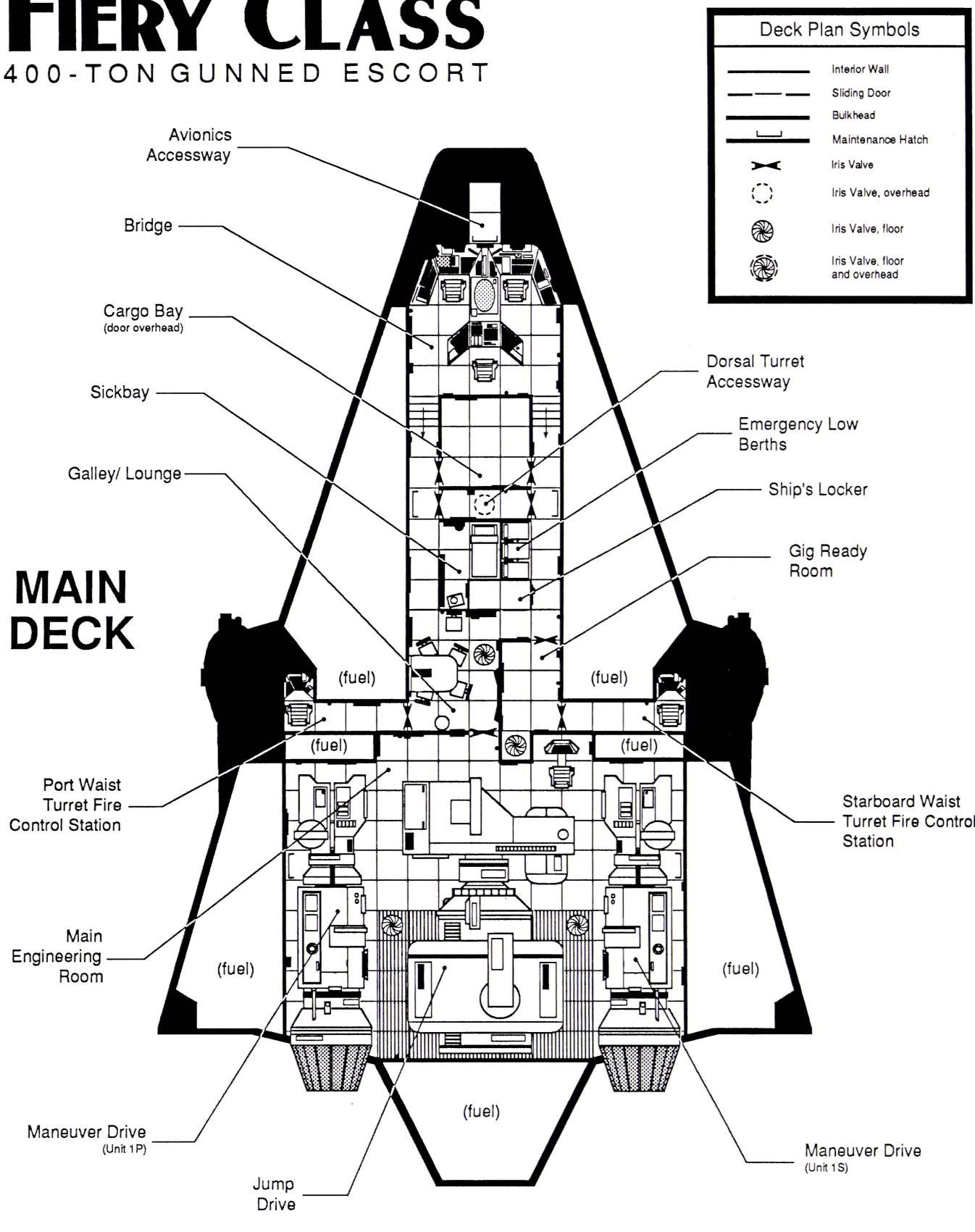
THE MAIN DECK

Behind the avionics-stuffed nose of the main deck lies the brain of the ship, the bridge. Three primary stations are located here, the pilot's position, the navigator's, and the main engineering panel. The engineering station is usually manned only during combat situations.

Various avionics and ship's systems monitoring panels line the aft walls of the bridge. There is little wall space not

FIERY CLASS

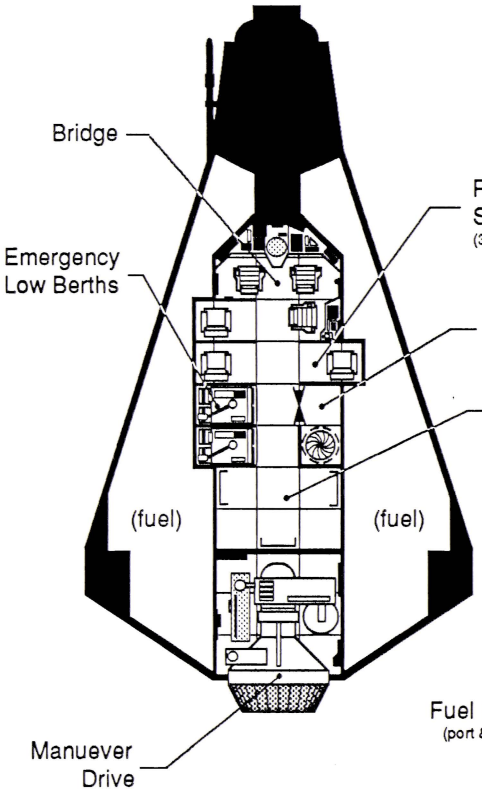
400-TON GUNNED ESCORT



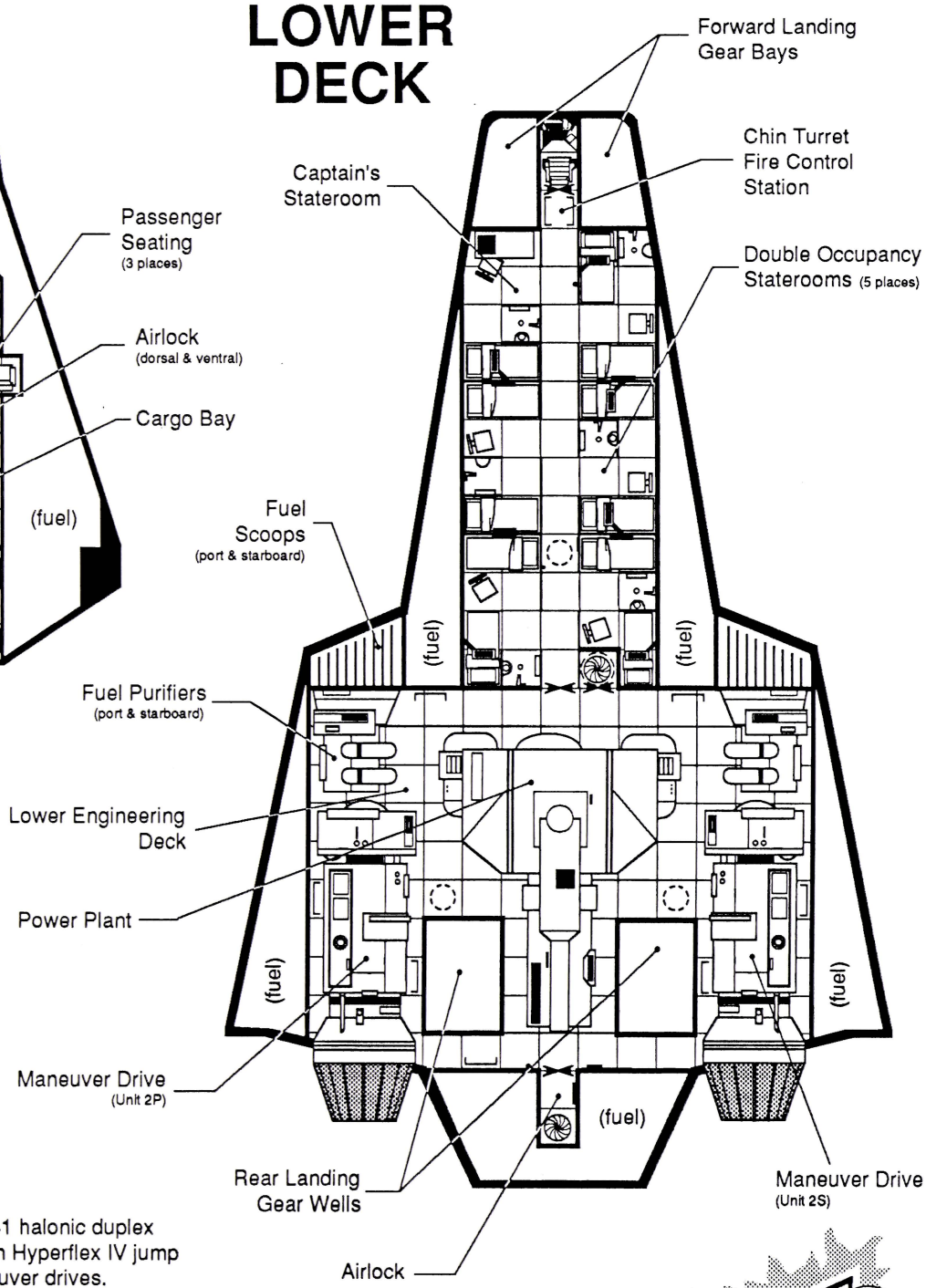
Deckplans By Rob Caswell

GIG

(Docks below lower deck)

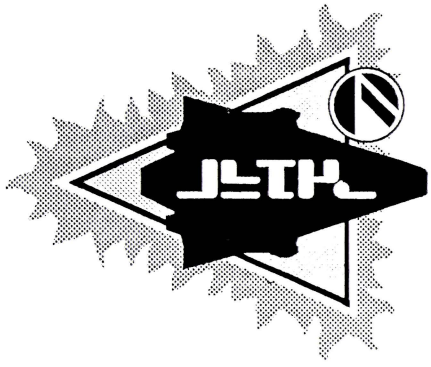


LOWER DECK



FIERY CLASS STATISTICS

Tonnage: 400 tons.
Crew: 10 total. 4 officers.
No ship's troops.
1 pilot/captain (off.)
1 navigator (off.)
1 engineer (off.)
1 junior engineer
1 medic (off.)
1 gig pilot
4 gunners
Jump: 4 parsecs.
Acceleration: 4-G.
Power plant: 4.
Engineering: Sternmetal TG-141 halonic duplex power plant coupled to a Kurgin Hyperflex IV jump unit and two LSP Iczer-4 maneuver drives.
Gravitics: Standard inertial compensators. 1-G floorfield.
Electronics: ISMM Model 4/fib.
Screens: None. Armored hull.
Cargo: 6 tons.
Standard Armament: Two outboard triple laser turrets, one chin-mounted triple missile turret, and one dorsal twin fusion gun.
Ship's Boat: One ventrally-mounted 20-ton gig, carrying a double beam laser.



taken up by instruments or access panels. A small crawlspace leads under the navigator's console and into the nose, for direct maintenance access to the avionics and reaction control systems.

Two doors positioned on the rear wall lead back through two axial corridors. Steps lead up to the level of the rest of the main deck.

Immediately behind the bridge sits the six-ton cargo hold. Iris valves lead in from either of the axial corridors, but the main hold access is from the large door above. Cargos are usually loaded in through the overhead door on grav pallets. The hold's environmental control systems can adjust to temperatures from -25 °C to 60 °C and pressures from 3 ATMs down to near vacuum.

In some cases, particularly with starmerc outfits, the hold is used as a vehicle bay. One of the most popular vehicle for this position is a Gravitic All-purpose Personnel/Utility Transport (GAPUT), a standard, small, military transport.

Further back, the corridor leads to the dorsal fire-control position. Next is sickbay. It is designed to house one patient, though a fold-down bed offers emergency placement of one other. The beds can be isolated by use of holographic privacy screens and localized noise-dampening systems.

Next to the sickbay is the ship's emergency low berths. In the event of higher casualties (3+) or potentially terminal conditions, the patients are usually put into cold sleep until the ship can return them to more extensive medical facilities.

The ward room serves as the crew's galley and lounge. This space tends to be highly personalized. Much of a crew's outlook and attitudes can be divined by examining the wardroom and noting its decor, selection of entertainment facilities, and so on.

The ship's locker is located just off the ward room. This serves as a storage space for general utility equipment as well as the primary armory. Across the corridor is the gig ready room. Here, the gig crew can suit-up and prepare for their missions. A valve leads down, through the lower deck, into the gig.

Two lateral corridors branch off to either side, leading to the waist turret fire-control positions. Lying at the rear of the deck is the main engineering room. The jump drive and most of the maneuver drive is positioned here. An engineering panel is tucked in a niche on the forward wall. Almost half of the floor is an open gridwork, allowing a view of the lower engineering room below.

Though the inhabited space on this deck is extensive, almost half of the deck is devoted to fuel tankage.

LOWER DECK

Dominating the *Fiery's* lower deck are the crew's quarters and the lower engineering room. Unlike its sister, the *Gazelle*, the Fiery does not drastically segregate its officers from its enlisted men. All the crew staterooms lie next to one another in the same corridor. All of the rooms are double occupancy except the captain's.

There are provisions for a single passenger sharing the smallest stateroom (the one which has a "bite" taken out of it from the gig access crawlway).

The chin turret fire-control station sits at the forward end of the lower deck. Residing on the opposite end of the deck is the lower engineering room. This houses the power plant and more maneuver drive apparatus. The fuel purifiers and scoops can also be accessed from this space. The walls of this room are covered with monitoring consoles, access panels, and tool cribs.

At the aft end of the lower engineering room is an airlock which leads to the ventral surface of the ship.

FIERY CLASS GUNNED ESCORT (Production Model)

CraftID: Fiery-class Gunned Escort, Type GE, TL14, MCr 399.36
Hull: 360/900, Disp=400, Config=1SL, Armor=52G, Unloaded=7216, Loaded=7474.
Power: 57/115, Fusion=7740 Mw, Duration=11/33.
Loco: 18/36, Jump=4, 40/79, Maneuver=4, NOE=180 kph, Cruise=750 kph, Top=1000 kph, Agility=1.
Commo: Radio=System
LaserComm=FarOrbit
MaserComm=FarOrbit
Sensors: ActEMS=FarOrbit, PassEMS=Interstellar, Densitometer=HiPen/250m, NeutrinoDetect=10kw, ActObjScan=Routine, ActObjPin=Routine, PassObjScan=Routine, PassObjPin=Routine, PassEngScan=Routine, PassEngPin=Routine
Off: BeamLaser=x05
Batt 1
Batt 1
Missiles=x03
Batt 1
Batt 1
ParticleAcc=001
Batt 1
Batt 1
Def: DefDM=+8
Control: Comp=6x3, Panel=HoloLink x478, Special=HoloHUD x3, Environ=BassEnv, BasLS, ExtLS, Grav Plates, InertComp
Accom: Crew=10 (Bridge=2, Engineer=3, Gunner=3, Command=1, Medic=1) Staterooms=6, EmergencyLow=1, SubCraft=Gig
Other: Cargo=85 kl, Fuel=2475 kl, PurifPlant=24 hours, Scoops, ObjSize=Average, EMlevel=Moderate.

Notes: Only Command and one of Bridge crew have own stateroom; others double occupancy.

If guns + agility not used, Duration=24/72.

TL= Jump=13, Man=11, Missiles + Lasers=13, Environ=10, Comp=12, Controls=13

THE GIG

The *Fiery's* gig is the same as that used on the *Gazelle.* The gig serves to shuttle personnel to a planet's surface, when the main ship needs to remain in orbit. However, the gig is useful in combat situations where it essentially serves the role of a fighter. With its single, nose-mounted laser and six-gee drive, it can sometimes shift the balance of smaller ship-to-ship conflicts.

The gig has accommodations for five crewmembers and a pilot. In addition, it has two emergency low berths installed which allow it to be used as a lifeboat or rescue craft. A few crews have taken to removing the low berths and using the area as cargo space.

KINKS IN THE ARMOR

Though a sound and time-proven design, the production *Fiery* is not without its foibles. The most notable of these is a product of its Kurgin *Hyperflex IV* jump drive. When transitioning from jump space to real space, the drive discharges an inordinate amount of energy. This energy burst shows up well on most ship's sensors, thus announcing the ship's arrival in a given system.

A few of the later *Fiery* models remedied this problem by switching to an LSP jump drive unit. After the switch, Kurgin discontinued the *Hyperflex IV.* Unfortunately for most crews, 90% of the *Fierys* were built with the Kurgin unit.

The other notable quirk in the *Fiery's* systems are the two waist turrets. Though extremely responsive when they do work, the General Products transit drive motors have been known, on occasion, to freeze up during use. This effectively disables the turret, not to mention endangering the ship. Sometimes repairs can be made on the fly to get the turret back in motion, but generally it requires the attention of a good ground facility.

The Imperial Navy was about to institute an upgrade program for the turret drives when Rebellion events started cascading. In the ensuing chaos and restructuring of priorities, the upgrade program was shelved. The choice to upgrade or not now lies with the individual factions. In the Domain of Deneb, Norris has put forth a upgrade program for ships serving with most of the main fleets, but reserve fleets are still burdened with the fickle turret transit drives.

ASSORTED DETAILS

As with most ships, both civilian and military, all the iris valves are coded to accept passage by those who have been authorized by the ship's computer. Even gunner positions are keyed to the specific duty personnel who man them. The buffer of privacy that this provides leads to a fair amount of personalization in fire-control stations. It is not uncommon to find assorted "good luck charms" or holos of family members dangling above the console.

Ship names for the *Fiery*-class take their inspiration from energetic adjectives or pyrotechnic spectacles. Some sample names include *Explosive, Brilliant, Nova, Radiant,* or *Phoenix.* Though gigs have no official names, many tend acquire nicknames from the crew, such as *Spark, Firecracker,* and *Meteor.*

DEPLOYMENT IN THE REBELLION ERA

Fierys can be found in nearly all regions of the Shattered Imperium. Many *Fierys* are still active today in the military sector, with perhaps the largest number being employed by reserve fleets. However, some *Fierys* have migrated to the private sector where they are used, most notably, as starmerc vessels. They can also be seen running in the service of large mercantile firms as armed convoy escorts. Since the advent of the rebellion, this has become a common practice for many trading companies.

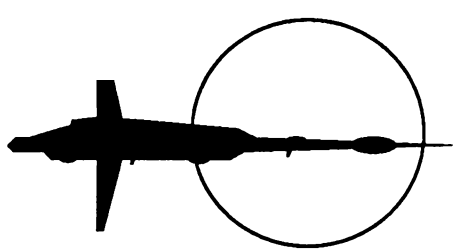
In a few cases, *Fiery's* have even wound up in the direct service of independent merchants, being used as armed traders. However, the limited cargo space restricts them to carrying only the most lucrative cargoes.

Though well-suited to independent operations, most starmerc outfits have chosen to employ the *Fiery's* in operating units of two ships each. The two-*Fiery* patrol combination has earned a reputation as a force to be reckoned with.

Some units have chosen to up-gun their *Fierys,* in some cases attaching the particle accelerator barbettes present on the *Gazelle* class. Though this may add some punch, it takes its toll in more difficult maintenance procedures and reduced maneuverability. The *Fiery's* production configuration offers a well-balanced set of capabilities for its intended job.

GIG

CraftID: Gig, TL14, MCr13.78
Hull: 18/45, Disp=20, Config=1SL, Armor=40G, Unloaded=360 tons, Loaded=400tons
Power: 4/8, Fusion=495Mw, Duration=5/15
Loco: 3/6, Manuever=6, NOE=190kph, Cruise=750kph, Top=1000kph, Agility=0
Commo: Radio=System
Sensors: PassiveEMS=Interplanetary, ActiveEMS=Planetary, ActObjScan=Diff, ActObjPin=Diff, PasEngScan=Rout
Off: Beam Laser=x02
Batt 1
Bear 1
Def: DefDM=+2
Control: Computer=0x3, Panel=holodynamic link x 282, Special=HeadsUp, Environ=basic env, basic ls, extend ls, grav plates, inertial comp
Accomm: Crew=3 (Bridge=1, Commander=1, Gunner=1), Seats=roomy x 3, EmergLow Berth=2
Other: Cargo=40.5kliters, Fuel=33kliters, Scoops, ObjSize=small, EMlevel=faint



STARSHIP COMBAT EXAMPLE

BEGINNER'S LUCK: *by Howard R. Leidner*

Late 1120, in the Efate system... With a flash of blue light, a starship winks into existence. The battered merchant Rantis *emerges from jump, triangular Oberlindes insignia emblazoned on her stubby wings.*

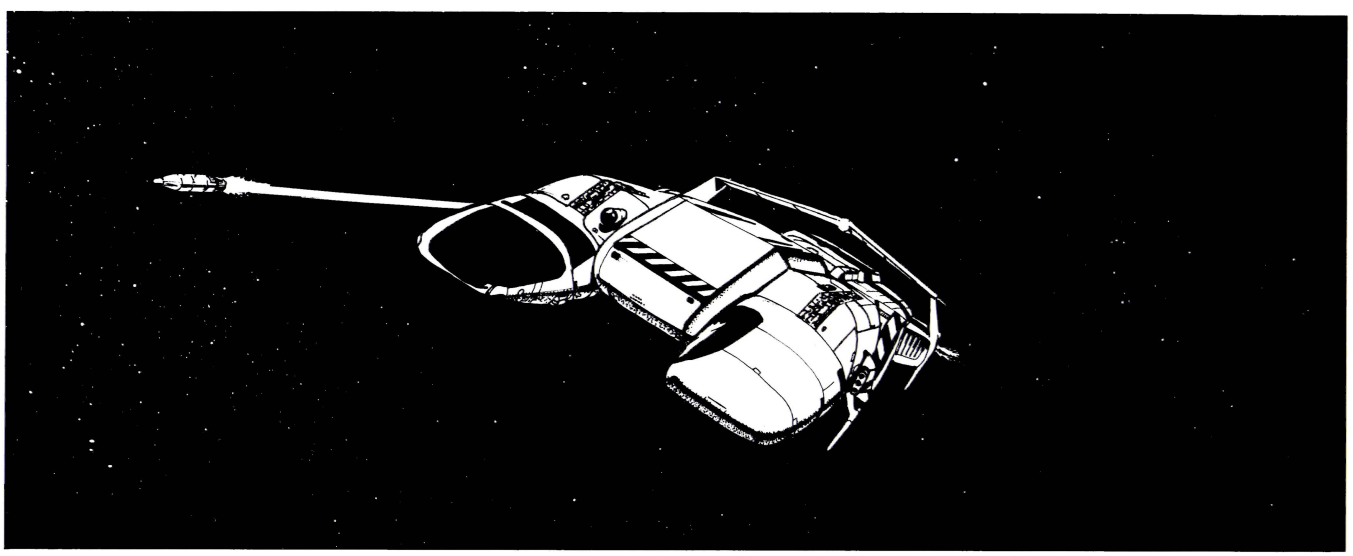
In the cockpit, pilot-captain Lon Chindir breathes a sigh of relief. He reflects on the long journey down the Spinward Main — the trip has not been easy — and how good it feels to be nearing home. And yet he finds himself unable to relax completely, for his experiences en route have taught him the value of caution.

He turns to his navigator. "Karin, run a passive scan — see if there's anyone in the neighborhood."

"Will do." Karin activates the Rantis' *augmented sensor suite. A quiet moment passes, then: "I'm getting neutrino emissions from the forward port quarter. Let me see what the densitometer says... something solid, a fairly large blip."*

"Try a pinpoint."

Karin's fingers again play over the holocontrols. "A ship... displacement about 6,000 kiloliters... she's about 30,000 klicks away, accelerating towards us."



"Can you get an ID?" Lon asks, a hint of trepidation in his voice.

"One second... Nishemani-*class corsair!" Karin declares. At the same time, a shudder runs through the hull, its intensity only partially dampened by the inertial compensators. The computer signals an alarm.*

Lon races to investigate. "Computer, what's the problem?"

"The port fuel tank has been breached," the computer reports impersonally. "One hundred forty kiloliters of fuel have been lost."

"The corsair's still coming, Lon."

Does this sound like a typical starship encounter? In part, the answer depends on the encounter's setting. Such a situation is more likely on Deneb's frontier than in the Core. But with the current Rebellion, armed conflict in space has become more common throughout Imperial territory. Corsairs increase in number, sanctioned by letters of marque. Warships patrol with disheartening frequency. And both circumstances make life hard for PCs.

This time in **Beginners' Luck**, we'll look at starship combat, broken down and explained in depth. We'll adhere closely to the material presented in the MegaTraveller *Referee's Manual,* beginning on page 90 — it will help you understand this example better if you refer back to the *Referee's Manual* when we say to — so keep the book handy. We're also assuming in this example that you have all the MegaTraveller errata for the ship combat section. *(As a convenience to those who may not, we've reprinted the applicable errata at the end of this article. — Ed.)*

Let's begin with the first step: setting up the encounter.

ENCOUNTER SET-UP

When an encounter occurs, it will come about in one of two ways. The first is of the referee's own design. As a referee, I've imposed specific ship encounters on a group of PCs, encounters which were crucial to the storyline. At other times, a random method of initiating ship encounters is more useful. Refer to page 40 of the *MegaTraveller Referee's Manual* and page 91 of the *Imperial Encyclopedia* for more information.

Before combat begins, calculate the *tactical point pools* for both sides. In ship-versus-ship combat, the pool of interest is the *ship tactics pool,* the sum of all Ship Tactics skill levels of all crewmembers on a given ship. Each round, the points in the pool can be used as DMs on ship task rolls.

Once your tactical point pools are calculated, set up the combat session. For this combat simulation, we'll use the 400-ton Type R subsidized merchant (the *Rantis*) and the 440-ton Type K corsair. The merchant is a stock vessel with a few modifications. First, the ship has four triple turrets, variously equipped with six beam lasers, three missile launchers, and three sandcasters. For the sake of balance, the corsair is equipped likewise. Also, the merchant has a densitometer and a neutrino sensor installed.

SURPRISE

With set-up complete, the next step is to determine if either side has surprise. Generally, check for surprise only once per encounter. (This would change only if, for example, a third party entered the scene with combat already in progress.) As you can see in the *Referee's Manual,* surprise is a confrontation task. Use the listed skills for the appropriate crew members on both ships.

If the corsair — the offender — achieved surprise, it would take the merchant — the defender — completely unawares. If the corsair failed, the merchant would become aware of the approaching pirate vessel before it could take any offensive action. If by chance the corsair received an exceptional failure result, the merchant would surprise the pirates!

It should be noted that in the Rebellion era, most, if not all, merchants will be concerned with the increased likelihood of pirate attacks. With this being the case, the difficulty level of the surprise task might be raised to Formidable, if the merchants' sensor operators were especially wary or their sensors especially good.

Also, note that the raising of the alarm only occurs in fleets and convoys, and not in combat among single ships. The first hit by the attacker will alert the defender and end the attacker's surprise.

OPEN COMBAT

In the opening part of the scenario, the corsair surprised and attacked the merchant. The merchant took some damage, but was alerted to the threat that faced it. The next step, then, is to fight a round of open combat, where both sides can attack.

As stated in the *Referee's Manual,* the side with the largest tactical point pool gets to decide which side will act first. If the tactical point pools for both sides are equal, you can look at a number of factors to determine which side has the edge. Does one ship have a greater Agility than the other? Which ship has the most skilled pilot? Who has the most advanced — and thereby responsive — controls? And if all else fails, you can always flip the proverbial coin.

After the order of action has been decided, one unit from the side that goes first takes its turn. The ship can move, make a sensor scan, and conduct an attack. (Note that big ships are restricted in the number of attacks they can bring to bear. Smaller ships can generally use all their weapons.) Any attacks made take effect immediately.

After this, one unit from the other side takes its turn. Combat continues to alternate between sides until all ships on both sides have taken their turns. In our example, however, we have only two ships, one on each side. When both the *Rantis* and the corsair have acted, the combat round ends, and the next round begins.

This sequence of events stays the same from round to round, unless a unit makes the combat action called an *interrupt.* Here is an example: The offender — who in this case moves first — prepares to attack. The defender interrupts the offender and immediately takes his own turn.

Note that an interrupt requires a successful roll of the task listed in the *Referee's Manual* on pages 91 and 92. If the interrupting unit succeeds and takes action, that action counts as that unit's turn for the round. Failed attempts do not count, however. Don't forget that you can substitute Pilot skill for Agility, and be aware of the restrictions on multiple interrupts.

The comm panel lights, alerting Karin to an incoming radio message. She adjusts the board and puts the call on audio.

"You will heave to and prepare to be boarded," a hard voice instructs. "Any resistance will be met with deadly force."

Lon stabs the red alert and switches on the intercom. "Gunners, to your turrets. We've got trouble." Across the cockpit, Karin sends a mayday call with hardly a touch, keeping her attention fixed on the sensor displays. "They're moving too fast, Lon — I'll have to get a new fix."

"Do it," comes Lon's terse response. Weapon status telltales hold his attention riveted, lighting as his gunners each get to their stations. Seeming ages later, the last of four lights goes green — the turret gunners are ready.

"The corsair's closing," Karin reports, estimating ranges. "Latest scan places her less than a thousand klicks away."

Lon releases the fire control interlocks and tells the gunners to stand by. On the audio channel, the pirate leader speaks again. "Since you are too stubborn to surrender, you will face the consequences!" A pause of seconds, and then another shudder, like the last. More alarms sound, and the engine room signals on the intercom.

"Captain, this is Braice. We just took a hit down here. The m-drive thrusters must have been their target. Repairs are underway."

MOVEMENT

As brought out in the *Referee's Manual,* during a particular unit's turn, that unit may move, make a sensor scan, and open fire on its opposition. Let's take a moment to consider movement in the zero-G environment.

Movement in space combat is measured in 25,000-kilometer squares (or hexes) travelled per 20-minute round. A ship travelling at speed 4 would move 4 squares (or hexes) — 100,000 kilometers — in a single round.

Acceleration and deceleration are based on a ship's maneuver drive rating. A ship at station-keeping (speed 0) with a maneuver drive rating of 1G can increase its speed to 1 in a single turn. The ship can then move 1 square (or hex), or circle at speed 1 in its initial location. Initial speeds of all units should be determined when you set up the combat session. Once combat is joined, new movement speeds for all ships should be stated as they are changed.

Note, too, that a ship's maneuver drive rating is also the maximum speed change rate that can be made in a turn. For example, a ship with an initial speed of 30 and a maneuver drive rated at 1G can only make speed changes 1 increment at a time. Please refer to the example on page 92 of the *Referee's Manual.*

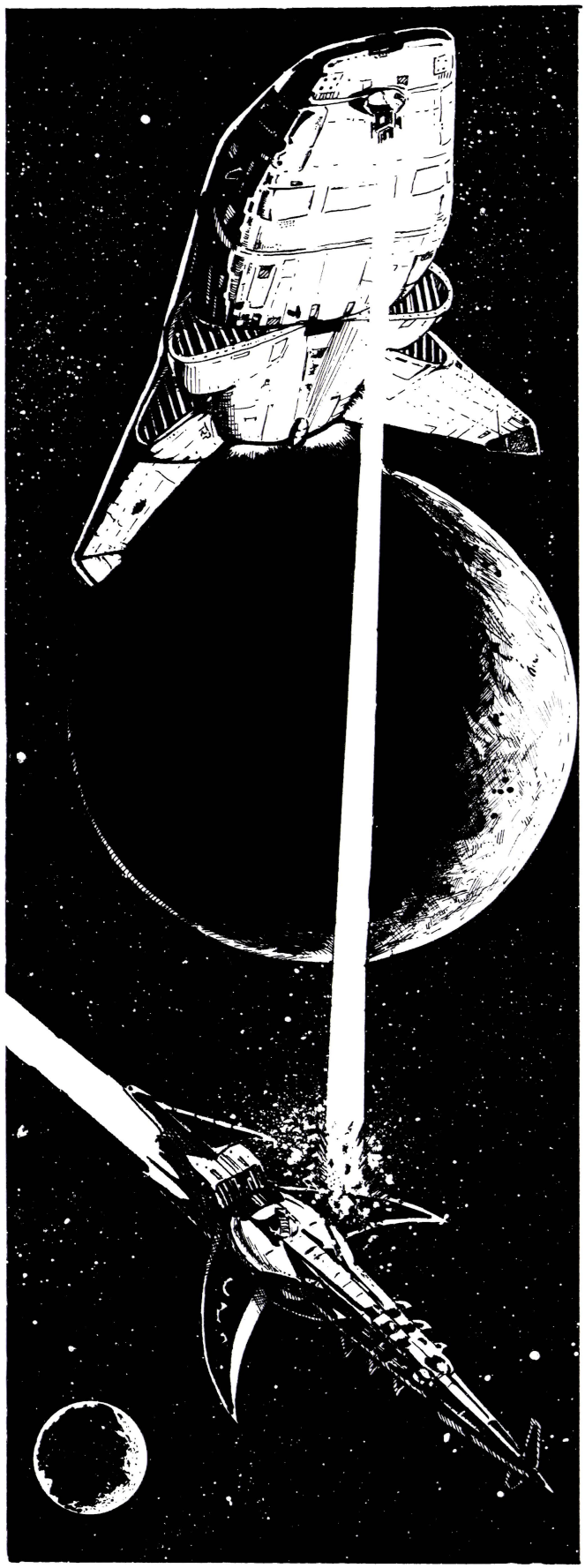
SENSORS

Another combat action is the use of sensors. Before we continue, though, a brief refresher on sensors is in order. Sensors fall into two broad categories, *active* and *passive.*

Active sensors transmit; that is, they send out detectable signals from the sensing ship. When active sensors are used, they can be detected by other craft.

Passive sensors are mere receivers, detecting natural and man-made emissions while emitting nothing themselves. Densitometers and neutrino sensors are specialized passive sensors. The former measure the density of objects by detecting their gravitic fields. The latter sense neutrinos, subatomic particles emitted from nuclear reactions. Neutrino sensors readily detect starship power plants and the use of high-energy weapons (primarily plasma and fusion guns).

For further information on sensors, consult pages 68 through 70, 87, and 88 of the *Referee's Manual.* See also pages 10, 11, and 18 of *World Builder's Handbook* and pages 17 through 19 and 21 of *Starship Operator's Manual, Volume 1,* both published by DGP.



In combat, ships are limited in the number of sensor tasks they can perform each turn. All ships can make at least one task attempt per turn. For each additional sensor task undertaken, a ship must forego the firing of one of its weapon batteries. Unarmed ships — ones without batteries — may make two task attempts per turn. Since the *Rantis* and her corsair opponent are small ships with three batteries apiece, each ship can undertake no more than four sensor tasks per turn.

For example, without sacrificing the use of any of her weapon batteries, the *Rantis* could make a passive object scan and pinpoint in turn 1. In turn 2, she could make a passive energy scan and pinpoint. In turn 3, she could forego the firing of her beam laser battery and make a passive energy scan, a passive object scan, and an active object scan.

What sensor tasks are available to ship crews? Refer to the sensor section of a ship's Universal Craft Profile (UCP), which lists difficulty levels for the various kinds of sensor tasks. As you can see from the UCP, there are six basic sensor actions, although many ships lack the sensor suites needed to attempt them all.

Those sensor actions can be classified in several ways, but here we'll separate the *scans* from the *pinpoints.* Scans locate the enemy; pinpoints lock sensors on him for targeting. First, let's look at location tasks.

LOCATING THE ENEMY

Obviously, before you can fire on your target, you first have to find it. The location task is a confrontation task. Use the most favorable sensor *scan* difficulty level from your ship's UCP. At times, however, you may want to restrict yourself to passive scans, even if they are more difficult. Remember, active sensors can give away your ship's location to the enemy.

Add the model number of your ship's computer as a positive DM, or substitute a character's Sensor Ops skill. Use the number of squares (or hexes) from the sensing ship to the target ship as a negative DM. Consult the *Referee's Manual* in order to evaluate the result, as your level of success determines the information you receive.

Example: A *Kinunir*-class cruiser is 2 squares away from a *Suleiman*-class scout. The scout, equipped with a model/2 computer, attempts a passive object scan. With a difficulty of Routine and a cumulative DM of 0 (+2 – 2), the scout's crew must roll 7+ to succeed.

The corsair continues her fast flight, forcing Karin to make another location scan. At the relative velocities involved, the scan proves no mean feat. Still, Karin manages to track the enemy blip. With confidence, she announces "Got her."

"Terrific," Lon replies, again patching in the intercom. "Laser gunners, pinpoint and lock are imminent. Fire on my order."

Down in the drive room, Braice pages the bridge. "Skipper, Braice again. We've jury-rigged the thrusters — they'll hold for the time being. Full speed at your discretion."

LOCK-ON

Once you've found your opponent, you must lock your sensors on target. As with the location task, the lock-on task is also a confrontation task. This time, however, the uncertain qualifier is also added, and where the location task involved a sensor *scan,* lock-on involves a sensor *pinpoint.*

Select a *pinpoint* difficulty level from the ship's UCP listing, remembering that active pinpoints can reveal your position (freeing you opponent from the need to do a sensor

scan to locate your ship). Once again, add the model number of the ship's computer, or substitute a character's Sensor Ops skill. Use the number of squares from the sensing ship to the target ship as a negative DM.

Note that even if you fail your roll, you may still gain some benefit, due to the task's uncertain nature. Be sure to refer to the *Referee's Manual* to interpret the results. Only if both rolls are failed is the attempt a total loss.

Once you have achieved both location and lock-on, so designate the unit in question. If you're using counters, replace a generic one with something more specific, or just flip it over. A sensor lock can be shared among friendly units, even though only one ship may have actually performed the lock-on task. Flipping counters makes it easy for the players of friendly ships to spot pinpointed opponents.

A sensor lock stays in effect during subsequent rounds, as long as the target ship doesn't move out of its square. If the ship moves, the sensor lock is disengaged, and a new sensor lock-on task must be performed.

"Karin, keep an eye on your sensors," Lon warns. "I'm plotting a course out of here, but I'm sure I'll have to dodge along the way. See if you can get a lock-on even so."

"I'll try." Another flurry of activity and noise — a sharp contrast with the silent black stillness outside the ports. Suddenly a tone sounds, and then, Karin's voice. "Lock-on is reestablished. I'm transferring the data to the gunners."

"Gunners, open fire!"

HITTING THE TARGET

With all the preliminaries of combat now completed, the actual task of firing now begins. Starship fire combat is a detailed procedure, but we'll break it down into segments. Please note that much of the material in the *Referee's Manual* applies to capital ships with large numbers of weapon batteries. If at first you concentrate on learning the rules for small ships, you'll find space combat is less daunting.

First, let's look at the sequence of fire. If you read the text on page 92 of the *Referee's Manual,* you'll notice that much of the information applies to larger vessels. The same sequence, adapted for use with smaller ships, is repeated here.

• Declare all batteries which will fire at a given target. (As most small ships have only a handful of turrets — and therefore batteries — this substep is usually quite simple.)

• Perform a to-hit task for each battery.

• For each battery that hit, perform a task to determine if the hit penetrated the target's *active* defenses; e.g. repulsors, sandcasters, or anti-missile laser fire. (Note that batteries fired in defensive roles cannot be fired again in the same round as offensive weapons.) If the target has no active defenses, skip this substep.

• For each hit that penetrated active defenses, perform another task to determine the penetration of *passive* defenses; e.g. black globes, screens, dampers, and — in some cases — the target's configuration. If the target has no applicable passive defenses, skip this substep.

• For each hit that penetrated all defenses, determine and apply the damage done.

The second part of the fire combat section in the *Referee's Manual* covers the use of defensive weapons. Few small starships are likely to have multiple defenses. At best, a ship may have a sandcaster or two, or laser turrets which can be used in an anti-missile role. For this reason, allocating fire from multiple defensive batteries is rarely a problem for the captains of small starships.

Passive defenses — with the exception of hull configuration — almost never come into play with ships displacing a thousand tons or less.

The third element in fire combat is that of range — probably the easiest part of the entire fire combat section. Simply count the number of squares from the firing ship to the target. Count the target ship's square, but not the attacker's. Then, look up the distance on the list of range bands on page 90 of the *Referee's Manual.* Once you know the range band of your target, you can easily figure range DMs on the to-hit task.

The fourth part of the section lists the weapon fire tasks themselves. As you can see, all of these tasks use a confrontation format. If you refer to the tasks, you will notice that the offender adds a weapon table DM in addition to his computer's model number and the range DM. These weapon table DMs are listed in the tables on pages 98 through 100 of the *Referee's Manual.*

Using the proper table for the weapon at hand, find the result for the battery's UCP factor. For instance, a missile battery with a UCP factor of 5 has a DM+5 on the to-hit task.

On the to-penetrate tables, you will also need to cross-reference the offensive weapon's factor with that of any defense being used. The number at this intersection is the DM to penetrate the defense.

In addition, remember that fusion and plasma guns have a DM+2 to penetrate.

The defender uses the DefDM value from his ship's UCP, and the model number of his ship's computer.

For example, the *Rantis,* on a to-hit task for her beam lasers at near range has to roll 10 or better to hit the corsair. How did we get this?

The to-hit task is Difficult (11+ needed). The DMs are a +1 for the *Rantis'* computer, a +5 from the beam laser weapon tables, minus a DefDM of 5 from the corsair's UCP (+1 + 5 - 5) for a net DM of +1. In this case, no range DM applies. Thus a roll of 10 or more with the +1 DM would give the 11+ needed to succeed on the to-hit task.

If the corsair uses its sandcasters to defend, the *Rantis'* crew will have to do another roll *after* the to-hit roll — a to-penetrate roll to get through the sand defense. In this case, a roll of 6 or more is needed to penetrate these defenses once we've scored a hit. Let's see how we got this.

The task to penetrate is Difficult (11+ needed), with a +1 DM for the *Rantis'* computer, a penetration table DM of +6 to get through the sand defense, and a defensive DM of -2 for the corsair's computer (+1 + 6 - 2) giving a net DM of +5 on the roll. Thus a roll of 6 or better with a DM of +5 would get the needed 11+ result to penetrate the defenses.

Finally, the fire combat section makes two notes. One entails line of sight, an unsurprising rule that states that you can't fire laser beams or missiles through stars, planets, or other large bodies. The other note discusses pinpoint location, which allows experienced gunners to aim for specific targets.

DETERMINING DAMAGE

Congratulations! At this point, you've hit your target and penetrated its defenses. Now it's time to see what damage you've done. Each battery — whether a group of turrets or a lone weapon — is allowed one roll on the appropriate damage table. These tables are found on page 101 of the *Referee's Manual.* If you look at the bottom of the three columns, you will see what weapons can roll on a particular table. There are several factors that may modify this damage. See especially the information under "DMs for Ship Damage Tables" on page 94.

In our example, only small ships are involved — spinal mounts don't enter the picture. However, critical hits are still a possibility. Both the *Rantis* and her attacker have factor-5 laser batteries, and both ships are in the 400-ton range. By comparing these two values on the table on page 93 of the *Referee's Manual,* we get the number of critical hits inflicted by a successful strike. In this case, we see that a successful laser volley by either side will score a critical hit.

Note that armor with a rating over 40 can absorb critical hits. For every 3 levels of armor a ship has over the 40-level mark, reduce the number of critical hits inflicted per strike by one. If, for instance, the *Rantis* had factor-43 armor, it would be immune from critical hits inflicted by the corsair's lasers.

When a critical hit is scored, roll two dice on the table on page 94 of the *Referee's Manual* to determine its nature. Explanations of the results are listed on the same page.

The laser discharge alarms ring throughout the ship. Instantly, sensors begin to report the success of the strike. The computer enhances the EMS rig's visuals, and the bridge monitors show damage to a turret and the corsair's stern.

"Do you think we got the drives, Karin? There's too much debris. I can't make out that last hit."

"It's a good bet — Look!" A small explosion blows in the location of the pirate's aft quarter. "See, her thruster plates have gone dark!"

"All right! Gunners, stand down. It looks like we've disabled our attacker." Lon slumps in his chair. "Karin, get on the radio and put in a call to Efate. Let the locals deal with them now."

IN CONCLUSION

This completes our examination of starship combat. The special rules listed on pages 94 through 96 of the *Referee's Manual* add additional dimensions to starship combat but are beyond the limits of this introductory discussion.

We hope we've shown that starship combat does not have to be such a difficult process. For the "old timers" out there, starship combat is more detailed and realistic than ever. For those of you who are new to MegaTraveller, you have many exciting sessions of adventure in store.

Remember, in space, speed is life. Also remember the combat pilot's motto: "See him, kill him, and go home safely."

Editor's Note: If you have one of the original editions of the MegaTraveller rules published in mid-1988, your rulebooks may contain a number of errors fixed in later printings. The complete errata, along with a number of helpful suggestions and clarifications, is available from our offices (see the credits page for address). Send us a self-addressed business-size envelope with three stamps and ask for the complete MegaTraveller errata.

MegaTraveller Errata for Starship Combat (Referee's Manual, pages 90 – 101)

Page 91, left column, Surprise (correction): In the referee's paragraph of the task for determining surprise, change "If any mishap occurs..." to "If *exceptional failure* occurs...". Thus if the attacker gets exceptional failure on the surprise task roll, the defender has surprise instead.

Page 92, Sensor Operation Tasks (correction): The word *Difficult* is incorrectly used in the sensor task for locating a target (on the bottom of the left column). The word should be *(Difficulty)*, meaning a variable difficulty is used on this task. The referee notes for this task explain how to arrive at the proper difficulty level by using the starship's UCP.

Page 92, right column, sensor lock (clarification): Each new combat round, as long as the *target* unit does not move out of its square, the sensor lock stays in effect.

If the sensing unit uses active sensors for the scan and the enemy has any functioning sensors, the sensing unit must automatically reveal *itself* to the enemy (just as if the enemy had performed an exceptional success sensor scan on the sensing unit).

Page 93, left column, range DMs (clarification): Change all references from "beyond planetary range" to "at far range".

Page 94, left column, DMs for ship damage tables, second entry (correction): Replace "If the weapon inflicting the hit has a UCP factor of 9 or less..." with "If the weapon inflicting the hit has a UCP factor of A or more, apply a DM of +6."

Page 94, DMs for Ship Damage Tables (revision): Change the wording of the sentence that says "If the weapon inflicting the hit has a UCP factor of ..." to read: "If the weapon inflicting the hit is a spinal mount, apply a DM of +6".

Page 94, Power Plant-n (clarification): Reduce the UCP power plant factor of the target vessel by 10% (minimum of 1) for each -n level hit. For example, the Mercenary Cruiser in the *Imperial Encyclopedia* (800-ton displacement) has a power plant UCP factor of 20/40. A power plant-1 hit reduces this by 2 (10% of 20) to 18/40. Once the UCP factor is reduced to one half (10/40), spinal mount weapons (if any) no longer work, and the maneuver drive rating drops by one half. An additional 5 hits on the Mercenary Cruiser would render the ship's power plant inoperative.

MegaTraveller Errata for Starship Combat, continued:

Any additional hits once the inoperative level is reached are applied at 10% damage against the right-hand value (for the Mercenary Cruiser, this reduces the 40 on the right by 4 for each level of power plant hit). If the right-hand number reaches zero, the power plant is destroyed beyond repair.

Page 95, Black/White Globes (clarification): Treat white globes just like black globes, except a ship mounting a white globe can see out, maneuver, and fire. All other effects are the same. A black globe that is totally on shows up on enemy sensors as a "hole" in space. The prudent commander will flicker his black globe to allow enough emissions from his ship to escape so as to blend in with background levels and effectively be invisible to enemy sensors (roll 1D x 10% to determine the flicker rate needed to currently match local background levels). A shrewd commander will flicker a white globe for exactly the same effect.

Page 95, right column, Special Rules (addition): A space vessel with an anti-grav based maneuver drive has its maneuver drive number halved when 10 or more squares away from a massive astronomical body. A thruster based maneuver drive does not suffer these effects.

Page 95, left column, Tractors (clarification): Tractor Pull + Target Weight = Agility *and Speed* Loss (round fractions up).

Page 97, (clarification): Change all references from "beyond planetary range" to "at far range".

Page 97, Starship Combat penetration task (clarification): The task for penetrating a defense in starship combat is confusing. A clearer way to express the task is: To penetrate a defense in starship combat:

Difficult, Off=computer size, penetration table DM; Def=computer size (confrontation) Notice the penetration table DM belongs under the offensive DMs and is added, rather than a defensive DM that is subtracted.

Page 99, Attacking Beam Factor table (correction): The To Hit values are incorrect. The correct values are:

Attacking Beam Factor	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**A**	**B**	**C**
To Hit:	**3**	**4**	**4**	**5**	**5**	**6**	**6**	**7**	**7**	**8**	**8**	**9**

Page 100, Attacking Missile Factor table (correction): The table headings may be confusing. The correct table is:

Attacking Missile Factor	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**A**	**B**	**C**
To Hit:	**4**	**4**	**5**	**5**	**6**	**6**	**7**	**7**	**8**	**8**	**9**	**9**

Page 100, Particle Accelerator table (omission): The particle accelerator table was accidentally omitted. Here it is:

Attacking Particle Accelerator Factor	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**	**J**	**K**	**L**	**M**	**N**	**P**	**Q**	**R**	**S**	**T**	**U**	**V**	**W**	**X**	**Y**	**Z**
To Hit:	**2**	**3**	**4**	**4**	**5**	**5**	**6**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**8**	**8**	**8**	**8**	**9**	**9**	**9**	**9**	**9**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**	**11**	**11**	**11**	**11**	**11**	**12**	**12**	**12**	**12**

Page 101, Starship Damage Tables (correction): The Die column is incorrect. The corrected table is given below.

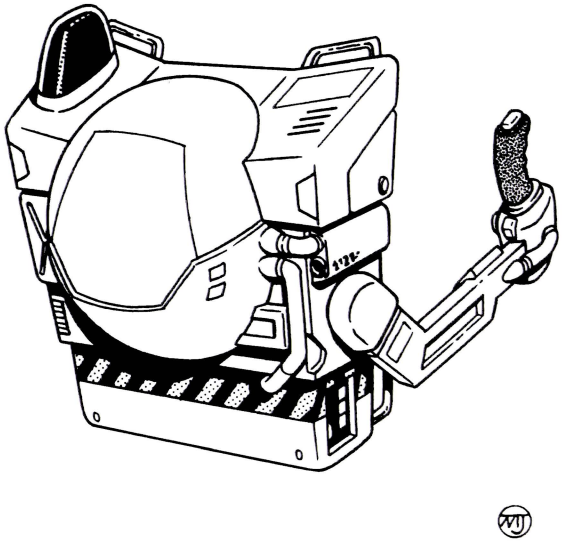
SHIP DAMAGE TABLES

Die (2D)	*Surface Explosion Damage Table*	*Radiation Damage Table*	*Interior Explosion Damage Table*
-2	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
-1	Weapon-1	Weapon-1	Power Plant-1
0	Weapon-1	Weapon-1	Jump-1
1	Fuel-1	Weapon-1	Screens-1
2	Weapon-1	Weapon-1	Sensor-1
3	Weapon-1	Weapon-2	Power Plant-1
4	Fuel-1	Sensor-1	Jump-1
5	Weapon-1	Computer-1	Screens-1
6	Weapon-1	Weapon-2	Computer-1
7	Fuel-1	Sensor-2	Power Plant-1
8	Maneuver-1	Computer-2	Sensors-2
9	Weapon-2	Weapon-4	Computer-1
10	Fuel-2	Sensor-2	Crew-1
11	Maneuver-1	Computer-2	Power Plant-2
12	Weapon-3	Computer-2	Jump-2
13	Fuel-3	Crew-1	Screens-3
14	Maneuver-2	Computer-3	Sensors-3
15	Interior Explosion	Crew-1	Fuel Tanks Shattered
16	Interior Explosion	Computer-4	Critical
17	Interior Explosion	Crew-2	Critical
18+	Critical	Critical	Critical
	Use this column for: Fusion, Plasma, Laser, Missiles, Particle Accelerator, and Disintegrator.	*Use this column for:* Particle Accelerator, Nuclear and Anti-matter Missiles, and Meson Guns.	*Use this column for:* Meson Guns and Disintegrators.

MEGATRAVELLER
Equipment Sheet

©1990 Digest Group Publications. Permission granted to copy for game use.

BACKPACK PROPULSION UNIT



TL 15 version illustrated

EQUIPMENT STATISTICS

	TL	Type	Vol	Wt	Price
○	9	Backpack Prop. Unit-9	10 liters	5.0kg	Cr3,000
○	12	Backpack Prop. Unit-12	8 liters	4.0kg	Cr2,500
○	15	Backpack Prop. Unit-15	10 liters	5.0kg	Cr3,000

SUPPLEMENTAL STATISTICS (OPTIONAL)

	TL	Charge Duration	Operating Noise	Power Usage	Comments
○	9	100 burn	hiss	0.01kw	uses compressed gases
○	12	200 burn	hiss	0.01kw	uses compressed gases
○	15	60 hours	low hum	0.2kw	thruster technology

USAGE RECORD (OPTIONAL)

Each square represents 5 burns of usage

○ TL9 : □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

○ TL12: □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

□□□□□□□□□□

Each square represents 1 hour of usage

○ TL15: □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

CUSTOMIZING NOTES:

Description

This is a back-mounted, low-power unit used for manuevering during EVA activities in a zero-G environment. Most lower tech models operate by expelling compressed gas, though some more complex units actually use a combustion process for higher thrust. Though bulkier than the refined 'gas' versions, the tech level 15 model is much cleaner in operation, as it uses thruster technology.

The exterior of the lower tech models sport a family of jet ports forming the reaction control system (RCS). These ports point in all directions to provide thrust in any desired direction. These ports are absent on the tech level 15 model. Instead, it houses an omni-directional thruster plate in a shpherical housing. The plate simply rotates into position for the desired direction of thrust. Aside from the resulting movement, there are no visual indications of the thruster's operation.

Each burn produced by a unit provides an acceleration of one band per turn. Recharging a unit usually costs Cr0.25 at most commercial facilities.

Most of these units are operated by a joysticks mounted to a folding control arms.

Skill Library

To use a backpack propulsion unit:
Difficult, Zero-G Env, Int, [varies] (hazardous)
Referee: Roll when a specific direction or target is chosen, or when precise manuevers are attempted.

To repair damaged backpack propulsion unit:
(varies), Electronics or Engineering, Edu, (varies)
Referee: Difficulty depends on damage level. Use standard damage and repair guidelines. Time increments for shop repairs are as follows:

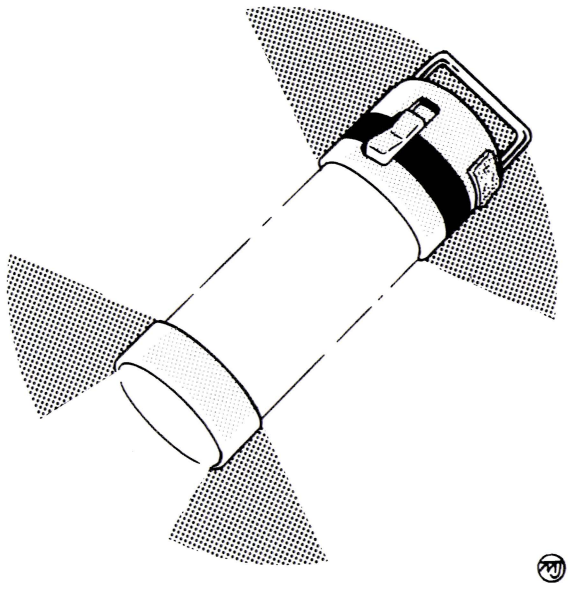
Superficial damage.....2 min.
Minor damage.....12 min.
Major damage.....5 hrs.
Destroyed.....12 hrs.

For field repairs, double time and difficulty level.

MEGATRAVELLER
Equipment Sheet

©1990 Digest Group Publications. Permission granted to copy for game use.

COLD LIGHT LANTERN



TL12 version illustrated

EQUIPMENT STATISTICS

	TL	Type	Vol	Wt	Price
○	6	Cold Light Lantern-6	0.5 liters	0.25kg	Cr20
○	9	Cold Light Lantern-9	0.5 liters	0.25kg	Cr25
○	12	Cold Light Lantern-12	0.4 liters	0.24kg	Cr20
○	15	Cold Light Strips-15	0.05 liters	0.1kg	Cr15

SUPPLEMENTAL STATISTICS (OPTIONAL)

	TL	Charge Duration	Operating Noise	Power Usage	Comments
○	6	3 hours	none	0.03kw	
○	9	12 hours	none	0.02kw	
○	12	24 hours	none	0.01kw	
○	15	4 days	none	none	handle costs Cr10

USAGE RECORD (OPTIONAL)

Each square represents 1 hour of usage

○ TL6: □□□

○ TL9: □□□□□□□□□□□□

○ TL12: □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

CUSTOMIZING NOTES:

Description

This is a type of portable lighting unit which provides light without heat. The tech level 6-12 units come complete with a belt clip, a magnetic adhesion point, and a velcro attachment surface. A standard charger comes with the device.

The tech level 15 unit provides the same level of illumination through a chemical reaction. The illumination level is variable and may be turned on and off. The strips are usually backed with velcro or a magnetic surface. Strips can be attached to vacc suits, equipment, or a small, portable handle converting it to a lantern. Like the lower tech units, the handle contains a belt clip and velcro attachment points.

Skill Library

To use a cold light lantern:
Simple, Zero-G Env, Dex, instant (unskilled OK)
Referee: Roll only when the person is engaged in other activities.

To repair damaged cold light lantern:
(varies), Electronics, Dex, (varies), safe
Referee: Difficulty depends on damage level. Use standard damage and repair guidelines. Time increments for shop repairs are as follows:

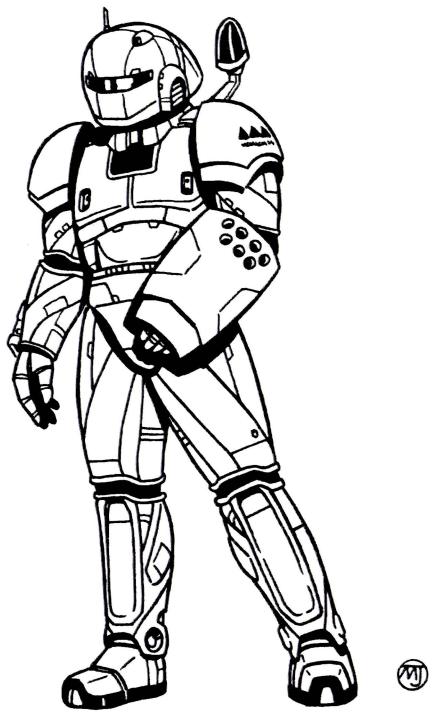
Superficial damage.....3 sec.
Minor damage.....15 sec.
Major damage.....3 min.
Destroyed.....7 min.

For field repairs, double time and difficulty level.

MEGATRAVELLER
Equipment Sheet

©1990 Digest Group Publications. Permission granted to copy for game use.

FORWARD OBSERVER BATTLEDRESS



TL13 version illustrated

EQUIPMENT STATISTICS

	TL	Type	Vol	Wt	Price
○	13	Fwd. Obs. Battle Dress-13	3.6kl	27kg	MCr0.29

SUPPLEMENTAL STATISTICS (OPTIONAL)

	TL	Charge Duration	Operating Noise	Power Usage	Comments
○	13	12 days	silent	2.0kw	armor=10

USAGE RECORD (OPTIONAL)

Each square represents 1 day (24 hours) of usage

○ TL13: □□□□□□□□□□□□

CUSTOMIZING NOTES:

Description

Designed for reconnaisance and heavy fire spotting, the Forward Observer battle dress is composed of a powered, strength-enhanced exoskeletal suit covered by a carapace of environmentally-sealed synthetic armor. The suit includes an IR suppression, sealed environment, a tuneable chameleon carapace, a modular arm-mounted laser carbine, a directional/scrambled continental-range communicator, a tactical battle computer, an advanced sensor package, an IR and LI telescopic visor display, and a heads-up targeting display.

Unlike most other models of battle dress, the Forward Observer suit carries a small personal shield. The shield is armored to a value of 25 and also sports the chameleon circuitry. A grav flight pack is included as a modular accessory.

The Forward Observer suit can operate in temperatures up to 1300 °C and pressures up to 600 ATM.

Skill Library

To pilot grav-assisted forward observer battle dress:
Routine, Grav Belt or Battle dress, Dex (fateful, hazardous)

To perform strenuous operations in forward observer dress:
Routine, Battle dress, Str (varies)

To target with battle dress heads-up:
(-1 difficulty level), Battle dress or Weapon skill, Dex

To control suit while overriding strength pre-sets:
Difficult, Battle dress, Dex (fateful)

To repair damaged forward observer battle dress:
(varies), Mechanical or Battle dress, Int, (varies)

Referee: Difficulty depends on damage level. Use standard damage and repair guidelines. Time increments for shop repairs are as follows:

Superficial damage.....1 min.
Minor damage.....10 min.
Major damage.....3 hrs.
Destroyed.....10 hrs.

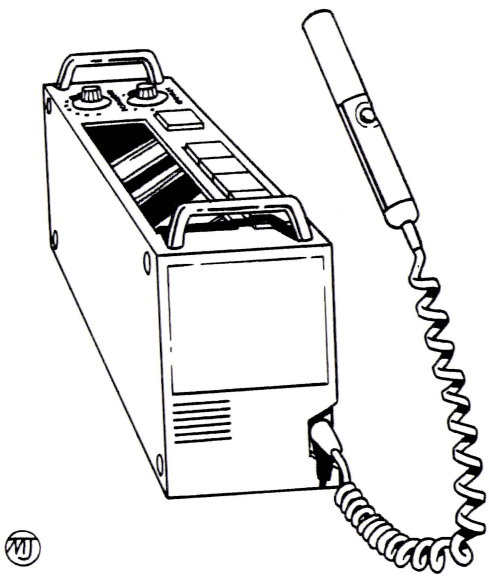
For field repairs, double time and difficulty level.

MEGATRAVELLER

Equipment Sheet

©1990 Digest Group Publications. Permission granted to copy for game use.

RADIATION COUNTER



TL7 version illustrated

EQUIPMENT STATISTICS

	TL	Type	Vol	Wt	Price
○	5	Radiation Counter	2 liters	1 kg	Cr250
○	7	Radiation Meter	1 liter	0.5 kg	Cr225
○	9	Pocket Radiation Meter	0.2 liter	0.1 kg	Cr150
○	10	Radiation Card	–	–	Cr100

SUPPLEMENTAL STATISTICS (OPTIONAL)

	TL	Charge Duration	Operating Noise	Power Usage	Comments
○	5	8 hours	hum	50W	dial readout
○	7	1 day	soft hum	10W	digital readout
○	9	1 week	none	5W	vest pocket unit
○	10	4 weeks	none	1W	card/badge

USAGE RECORD (OPTIONAL)

Each square represents 1 day of usage

○ TL5: □

○ TL7: □

○ TL9: □□□□□□□

○ TL10: □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

CUSTOMIZING NOTES:

Description

The radiation counter (often called a "Geiger Counter" in Solomani space) detects high energy radiation, such as that given off by decaying atomic nuclei. It is used by a variety of professions: miners use radiation counters to detect radioactive ores, atomic power operators to monitor for leaks, and space workers to warn of dangerous radiation levels.

At low technological levels, the counter has two parts: a detection wand, which contains the sensor and is connected by a cable to the signal processing and power unit, which is usually carried on a shoulder strap. By tech level 9 the entire detector can fit into a vest-pocket unit, and at tech 10 macro-integrated electronics permit the unit to fit into a wafer the size of an I.D. badge. Indeed, space workers' I.D.badges usually include radiation counters.

All radiation detectors can provide data in both visual and auditory forms. Visual readings are provided with meters or digital displays; auditory readings are conveyed by clicking or tones, the faster the clicking or higher the tone, the stronger the radiation level. By tech level 7, alarms can be programmed to sound when either a set radiation level is detected or a cumulative radiation exposure is reached.

Skill Library

To take a radiation reading:
Simple, Sensor Op, Edu, 2 sec (uncertain)
Referee: At tech level 5 this task is *Routine*.

To repair damaged radiation counter:
(varies), Electronics, Engineering, Dex ,(varies)
Referee: Difficulty depends on damage level. Use standard damage and repair guidelines. Time increments for shop repairs are as follows:

Superficial damage.....1 min.
Minor damage.....5 min.
Major damage.....2 hrs.
Destroyed.....5 hrs.

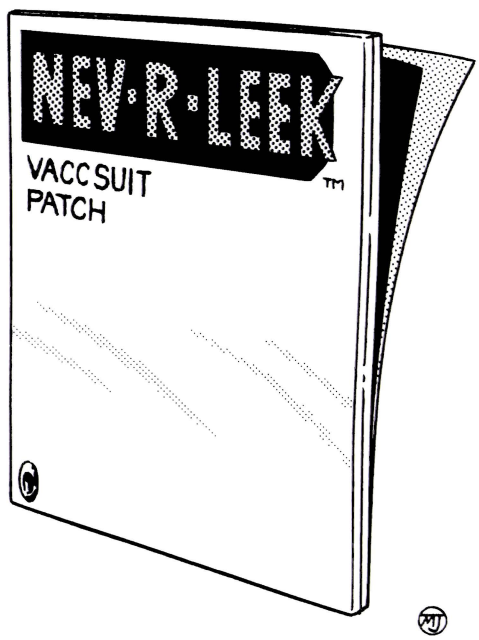
For field repairs, double time and difficulty level.

MEGATRAVELLER

Equipment Sheet

©1990 Digest Group Publications. Permission granted to copy for game use.

VACC SUIT PATCHES



TL 9 version illustrated

EQUIPMENT STATISTICS

	TL	Type	Vol	Wt	Price
○	7	Suit Patches-7	0.5 liters	0.25kg	Cr2
○	9	Suit Patches-9	0.5 liters	0.20kg	Cr2
○	10	Suit Patches-10	0.4 liters	0.20kg	Cr1
○	12	Suit Patches-12	0.3 liters	0.15	Cr2

SUPPLEMENTAL STATISTICS (OPTIONAL)

	TL	Duration	Operating Noise	Power Usage	Comments
○	7	2 hours	none	none	5 per package
○	9	4 hours	none	none	5 per package
○	10	12 hours	none	none	5 per package
○	12	infinite	none	none	5 per package

USAGE RECORD (OPTIONAL)

Each square represents 1 hour of usage

○ TL7 : □□

○ TL9 : □□□□

○ TL10: □□□□□□□□□□□□

CUSTOMIZING NOTES:

Description

These are small (10 cm. sq.) sections of airtight, heat-resistant fabric with vacuum-resistant adhesive on one side used for temporary, on-the-spot repair of vacc suit breaches. The tech 7-9 patches are composed of multi-layer material.

To use a patch, the backing is peeled off and the patch is applied firmly over the damaged area. All the lower tech patches are strictly temporary and last for the indicated time above (see *duration*). Patches may last a shorter time if applied over joints (knee, elbow, and so on) or other dynamic surfaces of a suit.

The tech level 12 patch actually seals a hole (under 3 cm.) chemically, making the patch as strong as the orginal material. Most suits above tech level twelve are self-sealing for punctures under 2 cm.

Skill Library

To apply a vacc suit patch in an emergency:
Difficult, Zero-G Env, Int, [varies] (hazardous)
Referee: If applying the patch to another individual, the difficulty lies in finding the breach and applying the patch to a potentially panicked individual. In repairing one's own suit, the difficulty manifests itself in controlling panic as well as the previous considerations.

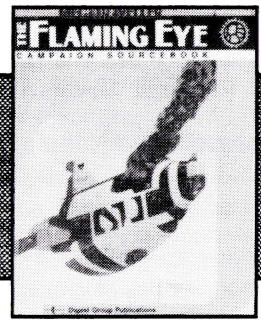
In general, if a suit patch is damaged, it is not repairable.

MEGATRAVELLER

THE SCIENCE FICTION ROLE-PLAYING GAME FOR THE '90s AND BEYOND

THE FLAMING EYE

A treasury of background information and scenario ideas guiding you through two detailed campaigns set in the Restored Vilani Empire. Abounding with new starmaps, world data sheets, and Far Trader deckplans. 104 pages. Price: $12.95.

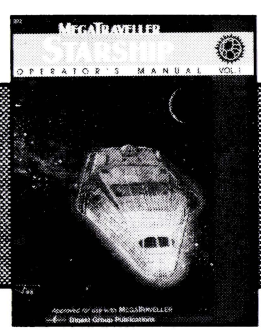


VILANI & VARGR

The first volume in the new series on the aliens of **MegaTraveller's** universe, this product covers two of the game's major races. Includes details on technology, culture, astrography, and much more. Experience these races as you never have before! 104 pages. Price: $12.95

STARSHIP OPERATOR'S MANUAL

Detailing operations for both the player and referee, this 64-page book discusses all the technical details of starships in the ***MegaTraveller*** universe. Includes an illustrated tour & fold-out plans for the 200-ton free trader; plus many useful diagrams and charts. Price: $8.95.



101 VEHICLES

An illustrated compendium of 101 different vehicles, ranging from the largest hypergrav transports to one-man motorcycles. Each vehicle is fully illustrated and described, with six of the craft in full color. 48 pages. Price: $7.95.

ALSO AVAILABLE:

- **THE MEGATRAVELLER JOURNAL Magazine:** Packed with lots of new ***MegaTraveller*** material in each 96-page issue. Topics include new equipment, ship designs, library data, Rebellion era news, maps, adventures, new rules, Q&A column, and more! Single issues $12.95.

VISA

Ask your local dealer for these products or order direct:
(P&H: $6% [$2 Min.] U.S. and Canada/ 30% Airmail [$5 Min.] or 15% 6-8 wk. delivery [$3.50 Min.] Overseas)

Digest Group Publications

515 Willow, Woodburn, OR 97071
Voice or FAX: (503) 981-4752

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

GAMING DIGEST: *by Philip Athans, Joe D. Fugate Sr., and Jay S. Kingston*

One of the worries in refereeing any role-playing game session is what to do if your players deviate from your planned adventure plot. Do you nudge them back in line? Do you force them back to your storyline? Or, do you just let them develop the new tangent?

There are as many approaches to solving this problem as there are gaming referees. To help you answer the question "how do you get your players back on to your planned storyline?", we asked this question to three different ***MegaTraveller*** *referees — each with a different approach to administering the game.*

Philip Athans—

When I'm running a **MegaTraveller** adventure for my regular group, I almost never have it as well-planned in advance as published adventures. Most of the time, I start with a fairly detailed world and a fully described NPC or two. Since I tend to run very *character-oriented,* rather than *combat* or *rules-oriented* sessions, these two elements are usually enough to get things started.

With this set up, all I really need to know is what the major NPCs are planning on doing and the initial stages of their plan(s). Since there really isn't much of a plot set up ahead of time, it doesn't screw me up too much if the players start making their own plans. As long as I have a clear idea of just what the major NPCs involved are trying to accomplish and why, their actions can be changed to meet those of the PCs.

This serves a dual purpose. For one, it avoids a clear-cut list of events that must happen in order for it to seem like a coherent story is being played out. The players write their own story — with the cooperation of my NPCs, of course. Secondly, this method serves to create more plausible NPCs. If the NPCs are reacting to the actions of the PCs, they'll seem much more like people than plot points.

It has also served me well to keep my adventures on the short side. The more convoluted each scenario is, the more likely it will be for the players to get "off the track".

This forces you to do one of two things. It could make the scenario still more intricate and prone to inconsistencies and short cuts that most players will pick up on and either turn them against you or just not enjoy the run. Or it could just trash the whole thing altogether, in which case you've just wasted a great deal of time and your players start thinking you don't know what's going on in your own campaign.

I know some referees who spend quite a bit of time and energy wondering what their players are going to do in a given situation, and very little time thinking about what their *NPCs* would do. **MegaTraveller**, and role-playing games in general, get very boring very quickly if you forget the *people.* If you have a handle on them, the plots and storylines will write themselves.

Joe D.Fugate, Sr.—

What do I do if the players don't follow "the script"? I do what most referees do — I improvise. But then I improvise a lot when the players are following the script, too. That way, they can't tell whether they are following "the script" or not.

One thing I try not to do is get flustered. Part of the fun and unique appeal of role-playing games is the way they offer a player an entire new universe to explore, and players should have the freedom to wander about and explore that universe if they like.

In fact, to build your skills at improvising, try refereeing **MegaTraveller** some time without an adventure in mind. Just let the players pick a place on the starmap to start and you take it away. Use the encounter tables to assist you, but go ahead and fly by the seat of your pants. Some of the most enjoyable sessions I've had have been the adventures that we did this way. We just fleshed them out as we went.

A particularly fun twist on this approach is to use a round-robin approach to refereeing. One session, you referee. The next session, have Bill referee. The session after that, have Judy referee — and so on.

Implied in the question of "what to do when the players step off your planned storyline", I think, are a couple of other questions. They are:

1) How do you avoid getting caught off-guard?

2) How do you get your players back to the script if they wander off the storyline?

Let's take a look at how to I answer these questions.

First, how do you avoid getting caught off-guard? Roll and pre-compute as much as you can in advance. For instance, let's say you plan to present a certain nugget to your players and the nugget has six distinct outcomes — and you roll 1D to select which outcome you will actually use. Roll the die and select that outcome well before the adventure session. This way, you have plenty of time to plan and flesh out the details of that outcome. Anything like this that you can pre-roll or pre-compute, do so.

Let's look at the other question — how do you get your players back to the story line if they wander off? One answer is don't let them wander off. Just saying to them "you can't do that" is very poor form, but you can have a squad armed Marines walk up (in battle dress and carrying FGMP-15s, of course) and say, "Sorry, but this corridor is restricted..."

I don't recommend you use such brute force very often or your group will tire of it quickly. Good adventures have plenty of red herrings and blind alleys. Their purpose is to get the players sidetracked for a while now and then, so you need to EXPECT that sometimes your group will take the "wrong" path. Let them. Just be ready to implement and "loop around" or "dead end" at the appropriate time.

A "loop around" is a red herring that eventually leads back into the main storyline. Let's say your group is supposed to go to the starport bar to talk to a local thug — that's the storyline. Instead, they go downtown to act on a rumor that the government is looking for offworlders to transport some documents. The PCs plan to close a deal to transport the documents offworld and then leave.

Our problem is to get the PCs to meet this local thug. One way to turn this red herring into a loop-around is to have the PCs witness a break-in at the government offices. As witnesses, the crooks, of course, want to "have a little talk" with the PCs and can coerce the group into a face-to-face meeting (at the end of a gun, perhaps). And wouldn't you know it, the thug they are supposed to talk to is one of the crooks they end up meeting. The PCs can get the info they need, agree to leave the world without ratting on the crooks, and things are back on track. Try to turn as many red herrings as

you can back into a loop-around — they're a lot of fun and they leave the players feeling the adventure developed in a very natural and exciting way.

The "dead end" red herring is generally easier to handle. You just play it out until it becomes obvious to the PCs the activity is not getting anywhere. Dead ends, however, can be terribly frustrating to the group once it becomes obvious the direction is a dead end. The best way to overcome the frustration factor of dead end red herrings is to either turn them into a loop around, or to make the diversion brief.

So that's my advice on handling players who don't follow the script. Realize that it's normal and seek opportunities to improve your impromptu skills. In the meantime, prepare as much ahead of time as possible to minimize being caught totally off-guard. And if you do happen to be caught off-guard in a major way, just call a brief break to give yourself a chance to regroup.

Jay S. Kingston—

Sometimes the best laid plans of mice and referees can be disrupted by a group of players who don't always play a scenario the way you've planned. This may, or may not, end up being a real predicament for the referee.

There have been times when, as a referee, I have been tripped up by a group of players taking my scenario off into a direction that I had neither planned on, nor wanted to go in. When I first started refereeing, this caused some major problems for me, both emotionally, and logistically.

Emotionally, I was extremely upset at the turn of events, because I had spent what I thought was a great deal of time preparing the session, only to be thrown off the track by the players making some unexpected moves. Logistically, I had to back-peddle in a major way, just to try to keep up with what my players were doing.

Eventually, I ended up throwing disaster after disaster at them, attempting to force them back onto the path that I had originally designed. This turned out to be a major blunder, because one of the players almost didn't make it, and the rest of the group ended up being quite upset with me. (Clearly, the iron-handed referee is not one of the more popular aspects of the game.)

As a result of this episode, I was forced to sit back and take a good, hard look at my refereeing techniques, and my own approach to the game. What I found, was that I needed to examine not just myself, but also the group of players that I was refereeing.

I discovered that, if I could climb inside the heads of both the players and their character personae, then I would better understand what kind of actions they might take, and therefore, plan a better game for them. The other thing I discovered was that my main desire as referee had been to run the game for myself alone, and the players were a secondary consideration. This, obviously, was a major mistake, because gaming has to be a fifty-fifty proposition, or no one benefits from it.

Another benefit of that first, disastrous session, was my decision to redesign the planning of the gaming sessions themselves. Instead of merely reading through a prepared scenario, or reviewing one that I created myself, I now try to plan out a few extra options ahead of time. For example, say the scenario calls for the party to examine a particular set of ruins, but no matter how hard I've tried to lead them in that direction, they insist on avoiding the place; this could be a real problem requiring many wasted hours of game time, except that I took the time to plan ahead, and prepare an alternate course for each major point in the adventure. Now I at least have some point of reference by which I can eventually guide them along to the original conclusion.

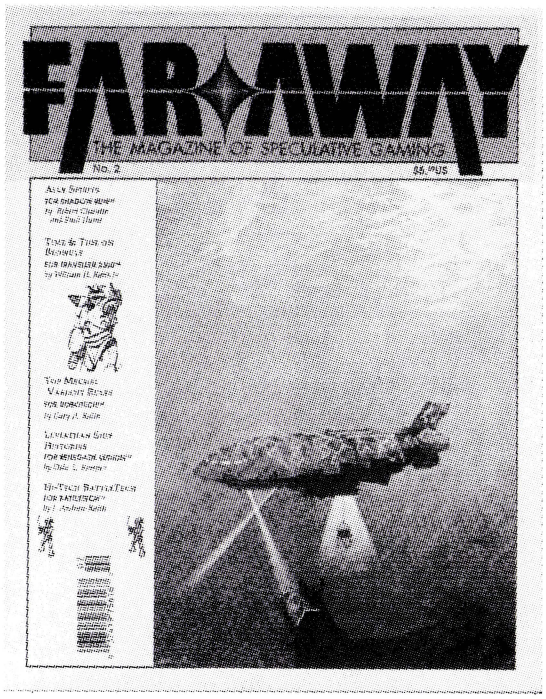
Listed below are a few of my "Gentle Prodding Techniques" which I use to get my players back on track, once they've strayed.

1. Hint at some rewards which will be found, if the party heads in the intended direction. (It is important also, to never let on to the players that they have strayed during the adventure — this could be bad for their morale, or it could lead to their losing faith in you as a referee.) Also, if you promise rewards, make sure that they are delivered!
2. Tell them that they have missed some valuable information, which might be vital to the mission/adventure, and it can only be found back on the original path that you had planned. This will become a self-fulfilling prophecy, because once they head in the prescribed direction, the adventure will build on itself.
3. Lay some clues, or bits of information in their path, that will lure them back in the direction that you wish them to go in. This will serve two purposes; first, it will get them to follow your adventure without letting them know that you want them to go that way, and secondly, if the hints are given to them cryptically, such as bits of jumbled code or riddles, they can actually enhance the player's adventure, and thus provide more excitement for the players.
4. A last resort is to imply danger or other ominous circumstances, if they continue to take the adventure in its present direction. I would really hesitate to use this one, however, because it smacks of the "deity" effect, and can really intimidate the players.
5. If all else fails, just try to go with the flow; and let the players go in their own direction. After all, if nothing else, it will test your prowess as a referee, and if you're quick enough on your feet, you just may find yourself being challenged more than your players are.

I guess the best way to put it is, "Have fun, remain calm, trust in your own abilities as a referee, and everything else should fall into place."

Have you ever wanted to go

Far & Away...??



Voyage with us

Far into

...the realm of the barely possible
...the future of the human & other races
...new worlds of imagination

&

Away from

...Known Space
...Any known limits
...Our humdrum time & place...

Far & Away # 2 * $ 5.00 US * Reserve a copy at your favorite game or comic store or write to:
Pacific Rim Publishing Company
PO Box 23651
Oakland, CA 94623
Subscriptions: 6 issues $24.00 US, 12 issues $48.00 US
Canadian Subscriptions Please Contact:
The Sentry Box 2047 — 34th Avenue SW, Calgary AB T2T 2C4
Other Countries: 6 issues $36.00 US, 12 issues $66.00 US

SNAPSHOTS OF THE OCCUPATION

LIFE UNDER THE VARGR CORSAIRS: *by James Holden*

The Al Morai shipping line sponsored a trade protection conference on Mora in early 1121. I rushed to attend, for I had just returned from a lengthy sojourn among the Aslan worlds in Trojan Reach, and I wanted to hear what the participants had to say about the future of shipping through Aorlakht space.

An unexpected pleasure was my introduction to Rebeka Tesoljo and Thad Sirmis, two talented staff reporters for the Corridor Chronicles. Rebeka and Thad had their own reason for coming to Mora — they wanted to share news of their home sector, overrun by Vargr corsairs.

Impressed by Rebeka's insightful analysis of Corridor's problems, I approached her after the conference. She told me of the year she and Thad had spent travelling through occupied Corridor. In gripping fashion, frequently glossing over the personal dangers she must have faced, Rebeka described the lives of the millions trapped in that strife-torn realm. I am pleased to here present the highlights of her account.

TURNCOAT'S FIEF: KAASU

Rebeka's journey began on Kaasu (1209 AA7A9CD-G), home of the *Chronicles.* Kaasu is a cool, water world, its atmosphere clouded by the byproducts of industry. Despite heavy gravity, Vilani miners came here to exploit the planet's rich mineral resources. Over time, Kaasu's focus gradually shifted from mining to manufacturing, and today, Kaasu holds the distinction of being Corridor's only tech 16 world.

Until recently, Kaasu also held the distinction of being Corridor's sector capital. With the intrusion of Taarskoerzn corsairs into Khukish Subsector, that changed. Even with the sector's main fleets withdrawn to the Core at Emperor Lucan's order, Sector Duke Criston Rehman set out from Kaasu to defend his realm. Gathering the scattered fleet elements left to him, he waged a desperate fight, only to disappear in 1119 in a nuclear assassination attempt on Ashima (1515 E443942-A).

Rumors of the Duke's survival filtered through Corridor, but rumors did nothing to fill the growing power vacuum at the sector nobility's highest levels. Robbed of its naval strength, then deprived of its leadership, Corridor could do little but crumble. For most of the sector, the Vargr stepped into the governor's role. But Kaasu was different.

On Kaasu, Marquis Jan Rehman, the Duke's brother, tried to make the most of the situation. Armed with the threat of a sizable tech 16 arsenal, the Marquis entered into negotiations with agents of the Vaenggvae, the overlords of Corridor's corsairs. The Marquis emerged with control of Kaasu and its moon. The Vaenggvae — or, in practice, their Taarskoerzn deputies — kept control of the rest of the system.

Rebeka voiced her suspicion that those negotiations proceeded too easily. Growing opinion maintained that the Marquis sold out to the Vargr, that he was allowed to stay in power as a reward for deposing his brother, yet nothing could be proven. Caught in the middle of this controversy was Amyla McNeill Rehman, the Marquis' wife. It was

through his marriage to Amyla — daughter of the Duke of Khukish — that Jan obtained his fief on Kaasu. Amyla found herself asking if it was through treachery that he kept it.

So Amyla hired Rebeka, at least indirectly, to atone for her husband's suspected wrongs. She pulled strings with the *Chronicles'* publishers to send a reporter and cameraman through the occupied territories of Corridor and share their discoveries with the people of Deneb. The publishers consented, and Rebeka Tesoljo and Thad Sirmis became that pair. But even before they ever left Kaasu, they learned that their journey would not be an easy one.

The first obstacle came when the *Chronicles'* publishers found themselves unable to fund the voyage. Considering the publication's age and size, the voyage was nothing unusual for the *Chronicles.* The agency's accounts could easily pay for Rebeka's trip. But the publishers found themselves unable to draw on those accounts. The local government had imposed an obscure emergency law, freezing the *Chronicles'* assets. Up against a bureaucratic wall — of her husband's design? — Amyla eventually had to subsidize the trip herself.

Getting off Kaasu was the next problem. Although the planet remained free, Taarskoerzn corsairs patrolled the system, randomly boarding and searching both inbound and outbound traffic. These patrols were especially fearsome as the corsairs had captured the shipyards of the Delainey Corporation farther outsystem. Along with the yards came half a flotilla of tech 16 *Aldasrin*-class SDBs.

Fortunately, Rebeka and Thad managed to avoid serious trouble. They booked passage on an outbound free trader, and they left Kaasu challenged only once by a corsair ship.

A WORLD DESTROYED: LEMISH

The next leg of the trip took Rebeka and Thad to Lemish (1808 D79568C-A). Warm and once pleasant , it was one of Corridor's subsector capitals and major agricultural and industrial producers.

In 1118, the situation took a drastic turn for the worse. Taarskoerzn corsairs approached, demanding protection money. The planetary governor refused, and the Vargr decided to make an example of Lemish. They mustered a fleet and attacked in force, concentrating on Lemish's ports and industrial facilities. The local tech level plummeted, port capacity was severely degraded, and more than a million died, all practically overnight.

Two years after the sack, Rebeka and Thad arrived in the midst of feeble rebuilding efforts. Buildings were only half repaired, if any attempt at reconstruction had been made at all. Disruption of the local traffic control net forced the residents to rely on ground transport, and Lemish's road system was far from adequate. With the infrastructure in shambles, food and water were scarce. General morale was abysmal, its effects plainly engraved on the pained faces of the native population.

One such native was Sir Elgir Nekeshand, a former official in the subsector government. In the aftermath of the sack, he retired to private life and turned his hand to farming the land on his estate. Rebeka managed to catch up with him in the fields, where Nekeshand tended his crops with the aid of a few human and robot assistants.

Rebeka asked Sir Nekeshand about the obvious problems Lemish faced in rebuilding. The weary knight minced no words. The planet's high-tech manufacturing capacity was gone. With regular trade disrupted throughout the sector and a rag-tag Vargr fleet still sporadically patrolling the system, tools and needed materials couldn't get through, even assuming the factories *did* work.

Sir Nekeshand pointed to the spirit of the local populace as the true casualty. Lemish had been singled out, apparently at random, to be a warning example to the rest of Corridor. Spurred on by the raving tirades of the mysterious Vargr leader Oekhsos, spurred by Taarskoerzn fanaticism, the Vargr had sacked Lemish, destroying the hope of the natives in the process. Unable to rebuild, unable to leave, their lifestyles drastically changed, Lemish's people had few sources of solace.

And those few sources were arguably less than helpful. One was a pseudo-religious group, the New Church of Submission, which Rebeka and Thad encountered while filming the countryside. The Church was an outgrowth of the 1118 sack. It preached a message of resignation to fate, that security was fleeting, and human labor was in vain. Only through submission to destiny, claimed the Church, could Lemish's inhabitants salvage even a measure of peace.

Naturally, the Church's message did little to bolster public confidence. Combined with an aggressive missionary effort — rumored to include conversion under duress — the Church was perhaps a greater danger than the Vargr. Rebeka envisioned a critical moment when a majority would back the Church and rebuilding would come to a complete halt. That could signal Lemish's final death knell, more so even than the destruction wrought by the sack.

TRADER'S HAVEN: GINNING

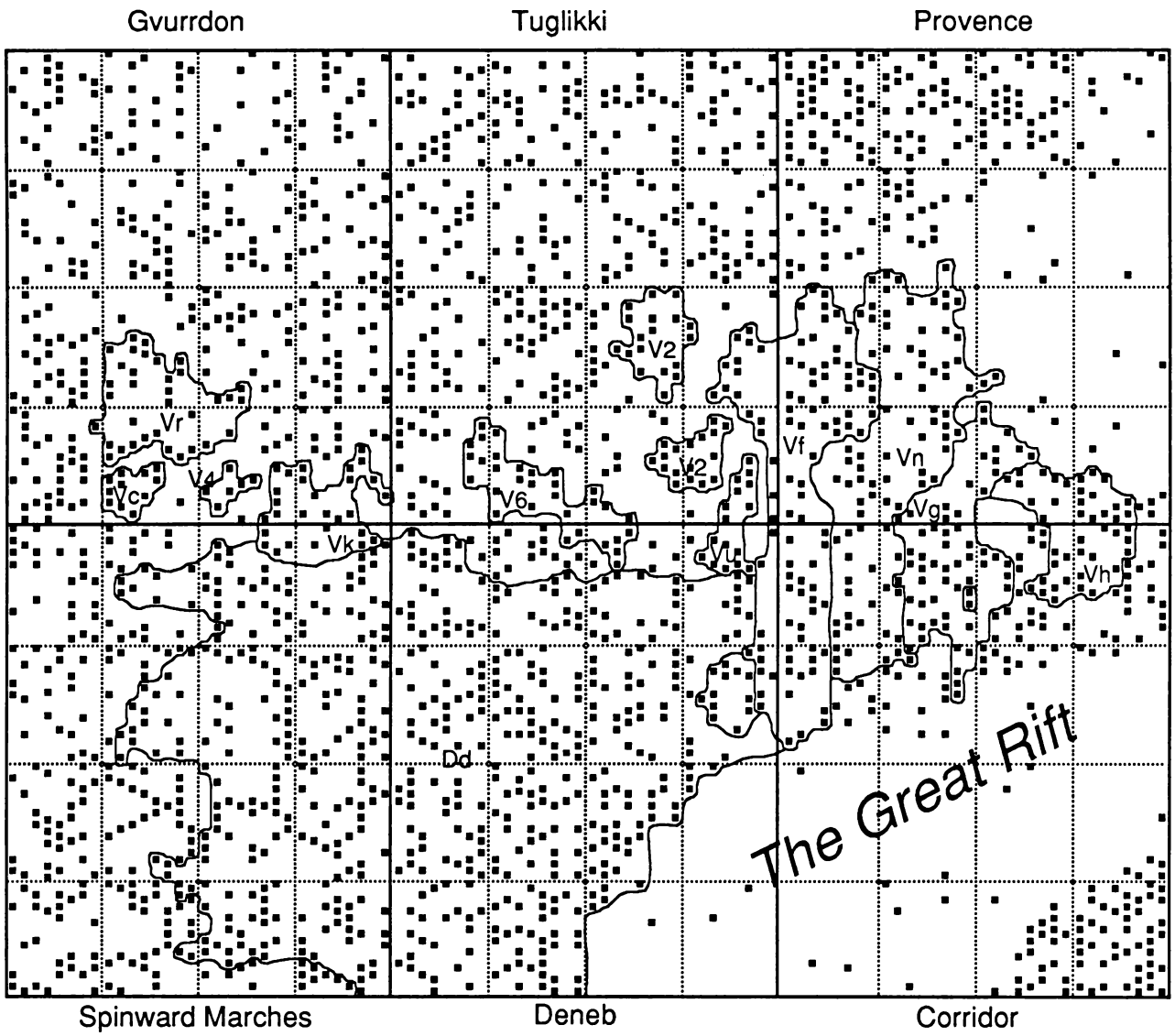
Rebeka and Thad's next layover came at Ginning (2108 A6315AF-B). Hot and dry, scorched by solar radiation seeping through its thin atmosphere, Ginning was an unlikely site for a Duke's capital. Yet word at the port and on the street maintained that Duke Criston Lans Rehman had established himself with Ginning as his base.

Even without Duke Rehman, Ginning was politically interesting. Up until Rebeka's visit, most knowledgeable people thought of it as the informal capital of the so-called Corsair Alliance. A small interstellar state, the Alliance was more truly an Anti-corsair Alliance, Rebeka attested. Its small native population bolstered by exiles and renegades, Ginning seemed Corridor's last bastion of free interchange.

The Alliance formed when a number of scattered reserve Naval elements regrouped in the area. On the edge of the Great Rift, the seven Alliance worlds occupied an uneasy position between Taarskoerzn, Irrgh, and Vilani space. Nevertheless, those Naval ships held back the corsairs, creating an area of space where safe passage was again a reality.

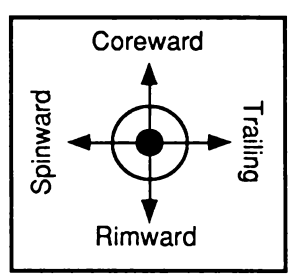
Time passed, and the Alliance began to draw the attention of its neighbors. To the Vilani, the Alliance was insignificant, but both Irrgh and Taarskoerzn corsairs saw it as a rich target. Then, the Alliance leaders tried a new strategy — they began to enlist the aid of renegade corsairs. Life as a corsair isn't easy. With the rapid shifts in authority faced by all Vargr, plus the added threat of Corridor's dispersed policing agencies, a number of corsairs found themselves hunted and impoverished. They had to go somewhere, and that somewhere was Ginning.

The situation came as a shock to Rebeka and Thad. After four years of portraying the corsairs as dastardly villains, suddenly their role had reversed. In Alliance territory, quite a few of the corsairs were the heroic defenders. Their loyalty purchased if not given freely, the corsairs added their ships to the motley Alliance Navy. Outsiders, seeing only unified squadrons of Vargr pirate craft, dubbed the state the Corsair Alliance.



Allegience Key:

Dd	Domain of Deneb
Vc	Anti-Rukh Coalition
Vf	Dzarrgh Federate
Vg	Glory of Taarskoerzn
Vh	Irrgh Manifest
Vk	Commonality of Kedzudh
Vr	Worlds of Leader Rukh
Vu	United Followers of Augurgh
V2	Windhorn Pact of Two
V6	Assemblage of 1116
V4	40th Squadron



GALACTIC DIRECTIONS

Vargr States

Local to the Domain of Deneb

Yet despite the bustle of thriving trade, an aura of secrecy pervaded Aseret, Ginning's capital city. Rebeka and Thad tried to ascertain whether Duke Rehman really was operating out of Alliance territory. First, they got the proverbial runaround. Next, they faced actual threats. A week of interviews and database searches turned up nothing concrete, but it did feed the pair's suspicions.

Something big was underway in the Alliance, both Rebeka and Thad felt sure. Maybe Duke Rehman really had survived and chosen it as his base. Maybe the Alliance Navy really was planning an offensive. Maybe... The possibilities were endless. But Rebeka raised an interesting question.

Look at Kaasu, she said, where the population suspects its alleged savior of personally handing Corridor over to the Vargr. Look at Lemish, where a growing number see complacence as the only solution to their problems. Two worlds, two crises of morale. On Ginning, everyone is sure that something major will soon happen — a positive outlook in its way. But what can that rumored something do to encourage the natives of Kaasu, or Lemish, or scores of other worlds, if it remains entrenched behind an impassable wall of secrecy?

ROBBERS ON THE ROAD: PLUNGE

Then came Plunge (2405 B2409CC-E) — one great, sun-baked desert, unbroken by field, forest, or farm. Yet Plunge was home to eight billion souls. A twisting warren of smooth-sided tunnels burrowed into the insulating rock. Whole cities — complete with vast hydroponic gardens and rushing springs — lay beneath the desolate sands.

The construction of Plunge's undercities was a project requiring no mean store of wealth. Five centuries ago, credits funnelled into Plunge by the millions to dig the tunnels. And from then on, millions more were spent to keep Plunge livable. But why pour so much money into a lifeless ball of bare rock?

The answer lay in Plunge's strategic position at the head of the great Ushamla Main. In the Imperium's heyday, vessel after vessel jumped along the Main, bearing trade back and forth from the frontier territories behind the claw. With the arrival of the Vargr, traffic along the Main slacked drastically, but those ships that remained still ended their journeys at Plunge. And those ships were the source of Plunge's riches.

Ruled by a draconian cadre of businessmen, Plunge was a world apart, seemingly untouched by the corsairs. But, as Rebeka and Thad discovered, behind that facade of prosperity lurked a darker reality. They first realized something odd about Plunge when they landed at the port. In several of the landing berths, the journalists found Vargr ships — armed Vargr corsair ships — being stocked and repaired and Vargr crewmen going about their business unhindered.

Further checks with the port authority, the local media, and a few loose-tongued representatives of Plunge's plutocracy revealed the world's secret. When the warships of the Irrgh Manifest overran Plunge, they extorted the right to land and conduct business. Cornered by their own dependance on foreign trade, Plunge's rulers conceded. Without a steady inflow of credits, they could not even feed the populace, much less maintain their opulent lifestyles.

This deal — freedom from raids in return for an open port — turned Plunge from one of Corridor's greatest trading centers to one of its greatest points-of-sale for stolen goods. Corsairs flocked to Plunge from parsecs around, bearing with them the loot plundered from world after world. Nearly anything could be had on Plunge, Rebeka reported — provided, of course, that you didn't run out of credits.

Plunge's status as an open port, protected as it is by the strong Irrgh Manifest presence, allowed it to freely furnish one other commodity: information. With the corsairs and merchants traversing the Main came news, sometimes first-hand, sometimes wildly apocryphal. Rumors of imminent offensives by the seemingly ubiquitous Duke Rehman flew through the tunnels of the port hostels. Tales of daring raids sped from Vargr mouth to human ear, accompanying the inevitable exchange of credits and goods.

During Rebeka and Thad's short stay on Plunge, one rumor especially piqued their interest. The visiting merchants and raiders all brought news of a major Vargr attack about to be launched at Khukish, some with anticipation, others with fear. With a battle looming on the horizon, Thad and Rebeka chartered a ship coreward, straight into the heart of the oncoming storm.

STRONGPOINT: KHUKISH

Khukish (1606 A77A989-F) was one of the first worlds settled in Corridor. The water world's Vilani heritage stretches back long before the days of the Third Imperium, having prospered ever since the inhabitants first learned to exploit the mineral-rich biologies of the local sea life.

For example, one amphibious creature, a large crustacean called the sushimur, absorbs traces of Khukish's abundant metals into its shell. The beast grows a new shell periodically, leaving the old one on the beaches of one of Khukish's many islands. If properly processed, the old shells can be a valuable source of heavy metals. Sophontologists joined the many biologists already on Khukish when the sushimur were found to be semi-sentient in the mid-900s.

But biology was far from the minds of Khukish's natives when Rebeka and Thad arrived in late 1120. Although Khukish had so far managed to stay free from Vargr control — and defend its neighboring agricultural partner, Shishkala (1607 B686654-C), one parsec away — it had done so only at a very heavy price.

When the Vargr invaded, the Khukishi government withdrew its insystem navy from frontline service. Rather than mount a counter-attack elsewhere in Corridor, Khukish's officers stayed at home, defending the old subsector capital from all assailants. Khukish ended up attracting quite a few vessels from fleets other than its own, including some major ships of the line.

Khukish's Vilani roots showed clearly in the Battle of Durima on 199-1118. On that date, the combined Khukishi fleet jumped to defeat a Vargr attack on Durima's Naval base. The base had been left nearly undefended in the wake of the Pretender Lucan's withdrawal order. The Khukish armada, with substantial backing, hit the Vargr in a lightning strike with a ruthlessness characteristic only of Vilani. The Vargr ships scattered before the onslaught, and the Khukishi broke formation to hunt them down one by one.

Unfortunately, the victory was only temporary — Durima fell to Taarskoerzn raiders, and in the Vargr reprisal that followed, most of the ships were driven back to Khukish to form a defensive line. Nonetheless, the momentary triumph at Durima bolstered public morale on Khukish, and most of the natives took courage in the ability of their navy to protect them from harm.

Khukish may have had to owe more to the lack of unity among the Vargr than its own consolidated navy for its safety. The Vargr raiders near Khukish never shared the same unanimity of feeling that enabled them to conquer Depot. Consequently, they never attacked Khukish in great enough strength to puncture its defenses.

When Rebeka and Thad emerged into Khukish space, local radio traffic showed no awareness of any impending attack. During the journey from jump point to Kiimalira Downport, business proceeded with its usual quiet. It wasn't until after their ship set down on Khukish that the two heard news of a major battle being joined.

Faces were tightly-drawn in the Khukish port. People stayed inside, watching and listening the holodisplays with tense expectation, forgetting their appointments in the moment's nervousness. Thirty minutes passed, then an hour, interminable media commentary punctuated only by brief situation updates from the front lines.

Finally, after three hours had passed, the newsnets declared that the Khukishi forces had their Vargr opponents on the run. Two hours after that, all the invading ships had either been destroyed or driven from the system.

Rebeka remarked that the whole incident seemed somehow unreal, watching thousands of people waiting anxiously in a comfortable, secure starport, expecting at any moment to hear a bulletin announcing victory. The natives, she reported, never doubted the ability of their navy to hold their enemies at bay. Their only worry was that their friends and loved ones shipside might be injured in the process.

Rebeka and Thad didn't stay long on Khukish. The world seemed wholly safe, so safe that it felt almost disconnected from the greater reality of Corridor beyond. While Khukish might have been able to defend its own territory, it could — or would — do little to help the miserable billions throughout the sector. The heroism of its determined starship crews did little to encourage anyone farther away than Shishkala. A strongpoint Khukish was, but one sadly meaningless in the context of Corridor's distress.

THE BEACON OF RESISTANCE: KOERGFOES

Last stop on the trip was Koergfoes (0205 B54359A-B), an unhurried world known for its agricultural products and the groundbreaking studies pursued at its Imperial Research Station.

With a small population — predominantly Vargr in nature — of less than 400,000, Koergfoes was an easy target for the Dzarrgh raiders who came in 1119.

In some ways, Rebeka explained, Koergfoes' situation had proved to be like that of Plunge. The corsairs who first raided the planet were hired by the local government, ostensibly to "defend Koergfoes against foreign aggression," in actuality to limit the number of raids.

Part of the bargain — its terms dictated by the corsairs, naturally — was that the Vargr be given control of the ports, supposedly in order to "facilitate the defense of the civil populace."

At this point, Koergfoes deviated from Plunge's example. Eloquent phrases did little to recruit the support of Koergfoes' citizens. Most recognized a protection racket when they saw one, even when it took place on a global scale. And unlike Plunge's inhabitants, the citizens of Koergfoes were determined to oppose the corsairs — and their government, if need be.

Partly, the differences were rooted in the psychology of Koergfoes' Vargr majority. When the world's leaders conceded to the Dzarrgh demands, they lost status, or charisma, in the eyes of their constituents. And in Vargr society, without a substantial difference in charisma between leaders and followers, lasting loyalty cannot exist. Individual Vargr will as readily follow their own lead as that of a planetary governor of no standing.

That is exactly what Koergfoes' citizens did. When Rebeka and Thad arrived, only a few weeks before Holiday, 1121, Koergfoes was plagued by a growing increase in domestic crime, premeditated violence, and terrorist activity. To be sure, many of these events were the inevitable examples of low-charisma Vargr struggling among themselves for a leader's role once higher leadership had disappeared. Vigilante packs even arose, their members seeking to boost their own charisma by forcibly defending the beset government.

But scattered among the petty theft and back-street infighting was something more noble — a popular resistance movement. The opposite of the vigilante packs, the resistance groups worked to boost their charisma by overthrowing Koergfoes' corsair-controlled bureaucracy.

By hindering corsair attempts to use Koergfoes as a base, by mocking government promises of protection, the resistance fighters became underground heroes.

Without legal authority, without wealth, without overwhelming force of arms, the resistance on Koergfoes has steadily climbed in popularity. The most notorious resistance leader, an Aekhu Vargr known only by the label Azozogh (Gvegh-Aek for "one who harasses"), rivals the mysterious Oekhsos in the size of his local following. Azozogh works as a counterweight to Oekhsos' anti-human, anti-Imperial ravings, encouraging interracial cooperation against the common threat of foreign domination.

Obviously, popularity alone isn't enough. Wars cannot be won sheerly through the good wishes of the people. Even Azozogh was finally captured by the government after waging his secret war for nearly two years. Only days after Thad and Rebeka arrived on Koergfoes, Azozogh was hauled before the planetary judiciary, his trial transmitted live across the global datanets.

But Azozogh's popularity only grew again. The publicity surrounding his capture and prosecution merely stiffened

the public's resolve to drive the corsairs back to Provence. Their hero imprisoned, the resistance groups continued to perfect new plans for deposing the despised regime. One group staged a major show just as Rebeka and Thad left for Deneb, sabotaging an uplink transceiver linking Koergfoes' main port with the sensor arrays in orbit overhead.

Rebeka ended her tale with another interesting opinion. She asked me which world of those she described seemed to offer the best hope for Corridor. My reply was indecisive, a tie between Ginning with its quiet stratagems and Khukish with its massed navy.

Rebeka said her hope rested with Koergfoes and the worlds like it. For although the fight promised to be long and difficult, perhaps the key to Corridor's survival was not, after all, military strength, but rather a personal sense of shared responsibility and courage. With that statement I could take no exception.

THE VARGR — CORRIDOR AND BEYOND

While the Vargr now control two-thirds of Corridor, they also harass the Domain of Deneb all along its coreward border. The following describes the Domain's interstellar neighbors — most foes, a few friends.

GVURRDON

Anti-Rukh Coalition (Gnoerrgh Rukh Loell): The Coalition has never bothered much with the human governments nearby. Its sole desire has been the overthrow of the Rukh government. The Imperium and the Consulate have rarely figured in the Coalition's plans.

Remarkably, the Coalition's goals have not changed with the isolation of Deneb, although the Coalition is worried by the improvement in Zhodani-Denebian relations. As the Zhodani support the Rukh, the Coalition fears the Domain will enter into some sort of trilateral alliance. It is possible that Coalition agents are working secretly to disrupt the Zhodani-Denebian peace, even while they continue to plot directly against the Rukh.

Commonality of Kedzudh: A loose interstellar government, the Commonality originally formed to suppress piracy. In recent years, the state has grown markedly. Importantly, member worlds still retain the right to conduct their own diplomatic relations. Thus, some of the Kedzudh worlds have declared their willingness to leave the Domain in peace. Others are secretly or even openly hostile.

40th Squadron (Ekhlle Ksafi): A militant federation, the 40th Squadron comprised the Vargr segment of the Fifth Frontier War's Outworld Coalition. Of the two fleets it sent against the Imperium, one was destroyed; the other was routed and forced to negotiate for peace. Although vocally hostile, the Squadron's naval strength is practically nonexistent. Corsairs based within Squadron territory pose its greatest threat to the Domain.

Worlds of Leader Rukh (Rukh Aegz): One of Gvurrdon Sector's larger and more stable Vargr governments. The current Rukh, while bearing no love for Norris, has kept her people from attacking the Domain en masse. Naturally, this hasn't kept numerous independent corsairs from heading rimward into the Marches, but the situation would be far worse if the Rukh Navy entered the picture.

Interestingly, some analysts see a Zhodani hand in the Rukh's stance. The Rukh worlds have long had strong diplomatic ties with the Zhodani, and with the recent thawing of relations between the Consulate and the Domain, the Zhodani may very well have asked for the Rukh's restraint. By far, the Zhodani would prefer a stable Domain on their borders than something resembling the anarchy of Corridor.

TUGLIKKI

Assemblage of 1116: The Assemblage is a strong alliance of worlds united in their hatred for the Domain. The Assemblage worlds banded together when they saw the opportunities implied by the Rebellion. Since that time, the Assemblage has remained fiercely hostile, the combined navies of its worlds wreaking major damage on Deneb's coreward subsectors.

United Followers of Augurgh: Before 1116, the UFA was a political neutral. Although not openly supportive of the Imperium, the two states quietly conducted a substantial amount of trade. Then came the collapse of Corridor, and the situation changed.

Outwardly, the UFA still continues to claim neutrality toward Deneb. At the same time, it secretly funds and equips covert raiding missions against rich border targets. When the opportunity arises, the UFA has even moved in to fill the power vacuum — it has annexed several worlds along the Denebian border, under the guise of "assuring the peace of the local populations".

Windhorn Pact of Two: The Pact united two small states seeking assistance against the Dzarrgh Federate on their trailing borders. The Windhorn Pact has had little involvement in the turmoil following Strephon's death and the withdrawal of the Corridor Fleet. The Pact is too small, too decentralized, and too far from the Denebian border to launch a major assault.

Nevertheless, the Pact toes the line politically, passively supporting Dzarrgh and Augurgh raids. The worlds of the Pact prefer to keep their larger neighbors' attention focused on the Domain.

PROVENCE

Dzarrgh Federate: Up until 1117, the Federate was an Imperial trading partner, and relations between the two governments had long been friendly. With the withdrawal of Corridor's defenses and the isolation of Deneb, however, the Dzarrgh leadership saw a chance for gains much greater than those obtained through trade. Trade and diplomacy abruptly ceased, and the Federate readied an all-out assault.

Although very loosely organized, the Federate has been a painful thorn in the Domain's side. With both corsairs and naval forces pouring out of Dzarrgh territory into Deneb and Corridor, Archduke Norris has been hard pressed to defend his borders.

Glory of Taarskoerzn: A small but fanatical government, the Glory has proven nothing but rapacious in its attacks on Corridor. The Taarskoerzn navy, bolstered by corsair mercenaries, coerced and fought its way through Irrgh territory into human space. Since then, the Taarskoerzn forces have met with great success, both in looting Imperial and Irrgh worlds. Perhaps the most heinous act of the Glory was the lead it took in sacking Lemish — an attack that took the lives of more than a million people.

The Vaenggvae: Originally a band of Taarskoerzn corsairs, this group wrested control of the Corridor Depot from Imperial hands. Under the control of the Vargr Nougzoel, the Vaenggvae now dictate policy to the majority of Vargr in Corridor.

Irrgh Manifest: A sizable and long-established interstellar state, the Manifest is bordered by two enemies: the Domain of Deneb and the Glory of Taarskoerzn. The Irrgh-Taarskoerzn rivalry has existed since Glory forces cut a channel through the Manifest toward the Domain. If not for the terms of alliance imposed by the Vaenggvae, the Irrgh navy would focus its wrath on the Taarskoerzn worlds. As it is, through, the Irrgh forces have no choice but to lay siege to the human worlds in Corridor — a task which they have adopted with great zeal.

RANDOM NUGGETS

by Matt Frisbee

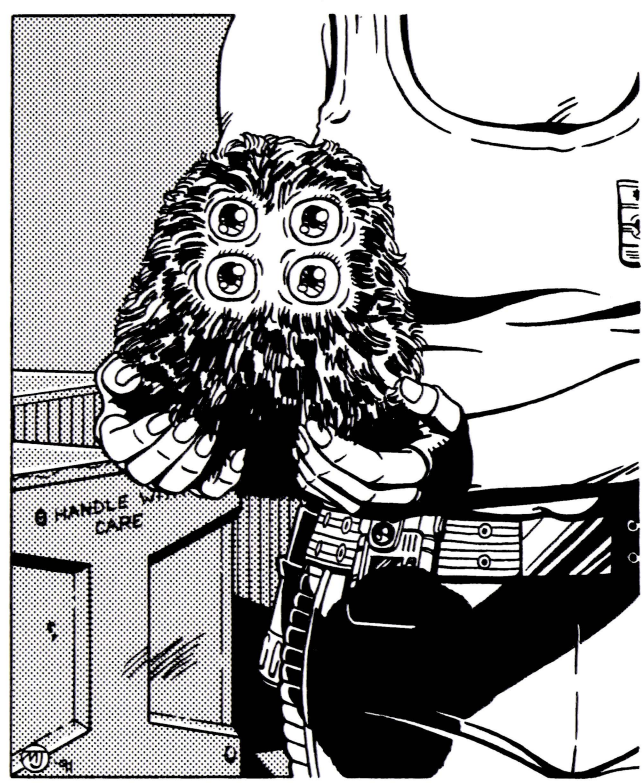
THE FUR FACTOR

The PCs find a stray alien creature which leads them into a variety of complicated situations.

Location: At the PCs' ship, while they are unloading cargo.

Scene: You hear a strange noise back among some of the cases. After moving a few boxes and taking a careful look around, you see a small ball of gray fur with large, blue eyes. It looks at you expectantly, though apparently with a slight amount of mistrust. There are no obvious limbs you can see, and while you're watching it, it again emits the sound, though softly, which originally drew your attention. *"Quirrrp!"*

Action: The details of this creature are given in the sidebar: *The Illgawf.* Grabbing the animal is impossible. Every time a character tries this, the creature will manage to either evade the grasping hands or twist itself free, leaving the character with only a few strands of the creature's fur. Although it appears timid, it doesn't act that way when confronted. Coaxing the animal, which is roughly the size of a soccer ball, out from behind the cases will take a task roll.



To coax the animal out:
Routine, (any Animal Handling skill), 10 sec., (unskilled OK, safe)
Referee: Failure indicates the animal isn't convinced. Each subsequent task roll will have a modifier of +2 to the roll, and will not increase in difficulty.

The PCs will get a surprise when the creature finally does come out, as first impressions were correct: this thing has no limbs! Moving like a shaky blob, it squirms over to the coaxer and assumes the shape of an upright pear with the eyes on top. Everyone who saw this action can make another task roll.

To recognize animal:
Difficult, (experience), instant (unskilled OK, safe)
Referee: If any of the characters have been in the Glisten subsector of the Spinward Marches, give them a +3. Scouts get an additional +1, regardless. If a character succeeds, then let the player read the sidebar. Access to a library database drops the difficulty to Routine.

After an appropriate pause, the characters will notice the animal appears to be in some distress. It turns and twists for a moment, letting out a protracted *quirrrp!* or two, before sliding off of what appears to be a small, plastic packet. Further investigation reveals several small, uncut and extremely rare gemstones inside the packet. A character with Broker skill can readily identify the stones and estimate their total value at about Cr10,000 at current market value.

After this discovery, there are four obvious paths open to your players. Each one is explained below:

• *Take the money and run.* If the players keep the stones and the animal, they'll have a new pet and be Cr10,000 richer for a while. Any attempt to fence the gems on this world will draw a crowd of law enforcers and probably land the characters in prison for 1D years after a hasty, highly-publicized trial.

• *Give the stones and the pet back.* If the players try to return the creature, they'll find out there's a ship carrying a dozen of these animals in port. The master broker of the subsidized merchant will be extremely pleased and puzzled at the same time, but will take the animal back and reward the players Cr100 each.

The broker will return the stones to the characters if he's offered them, and won't mention them if they're not. Later, the characters will get ambushed by the same broker and a group of thugs with murderous intent. It seems the characters have accidentally stumbled into a major theft and smuggling ring, and the characters are liabilities to its members.

Assuming the characters survive, they'll have a lot of explaining to do to the authorities. The relative success of their stories will depend on how many of the attackers are left to tell their side of the it.

The players will be detained for 4D days going through the investigations and court proceedings. They can be consoled by the fact that the authorities have also detained the crew of the subsidized merchant. The characters will eventually be cleared and will have inadvertently stopped the smuggling ring.

• *Go to the authorities.* A cop out, but a smart move for non-combative types. The characters will still be hung up for 1D days with questions and detentions while their stories are confirmed. However, by the time this happens, the smug-

THE ILLGAWF

The Illgawf's origins are quite uncertain. It appears to be a genetically-engineered omnivore of the gatherer description, and has been found on several worlds in the Glisten/Spinward Marches subsector in several different climates. The animal appears to adapt readily to nearly all conditions.

The typical Illgawf is an amorphous blob of fur, about the size of a soccer ball (when holding itself in a spherical configuration) and masses about 7 kilograms. The fur ranges from a uniform gray to mottled black, but the eyes are always blue. It can change into several simple shapes, which vary by individuals and climate.

It can lengthen itself into a snake-like shape, about 3 cm in diameter and up to 65 cm long, and prefers this form of movement. Illgawfs are solitary creatures and tend to be nocturnal. the animal is generally lifeforce 3, hit 1/1. The animal has no way to attack and cannot generate enough force with a constriction to cause damage or even to impair movement much.

Many of its body functions are still not well understood, even with high tech scanning equipment. Trying to figure out how it manages to remain uniformly covered with fur when shape-changing is still the topic of many graduate studies in xenobiology.

The animal can digest just about any form of organic material, but prefers vegetable matter when given a choice. It never eats live animals, but will pounce on dead ones, if it's hungry. How it eats is yet another mystery, but it appears to surround and engulf its food.

How it makes sound is yet another puzzle. It does not appear to have vocal cords, but instead seems to make noises by engulfing gas bubbles as it breathes.

Despite all these perplexing aspects, Illgawfs are generally regarded as harmless to humanoids and are often sought as pets, though the animal's rarity prevents large-scale collection.

They breed about once every year and, being asexual, they gain weight until the time of reproduction. The Illgawf then splits into two animals. The original animal "parents" the new member for a period of about two weeks. Then the newer Illgawf heads out on its own. The typical specimen lives about 15 standard years and reproduces every year of its life.

The Illgawf is generally considered to be a highly intelligent and loyal animal. Most can respond to hand signals and vocal commands. Its sense of hearing is slightly more acute than a human's and stretches into the subsonic range.

Properly trained, it can act as a guard animal, waking up its master when it hears movement near an area.

glers are long gone. You'll still have the animal, though about Cr1,000 of import and licensing fees will be assessed to the characters for the animal. It'll be destroyed if the players refuse to pay.

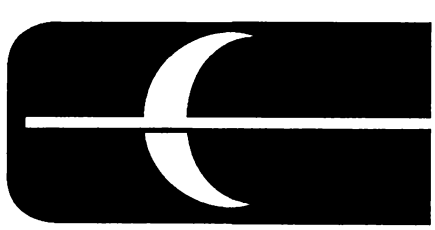
• *Play private investigator.* An adventurous group will choose this option and discover the smuggling ring, as above. If they put all the facts together without tipping off the smugglers, and then go to the authorities, they'll have the help of law enforcement and the starport authority to keep the smugglers from getting away.

The characters will still be hung up with hassles for 1D days, but at least they won't be in jail. The cops will waive the costs for the animal, should the players choose to keep it, and the planetary government will either reward the players with cash (about Cr5,000) or a lucrative, interstellar mail contract (3D tons at Cr6,500 per ton, instead of standard rates).

Digest Group Publications has Moved!

NEW ADDRESS:
Digest Group Publications
515 Willow Ave
Woodburn, OR 97071-2109

NEW TELEPHONE:
(503) 981-4752



Q&A Continued from Page 26

How can a gauss rifle have a low signature? Gauss rifle and gauss pistol bullets are clearly supersonic. Doesn't this cause the breaking of the sound barrier? — *M.L.*

You would think so, wouldn't you? But we have it on very good authority that, if properly designed, it would make little sound. How we discovered this is an interesting story.

Years ago, I was on an airplane flying to Chicago and I sat next to a physicist who worked for the weapons department of the Pentagon. His job was to invent and research new weapon systems proposals. Was I ever excited! I told him about how I wrote for this science fiction game called Traveller, and I bent his ear talking about the plausibility of Traveller's high tech weapons for the next three hours.

I asked him if a gauss weapon could be designed with a bullet that travelled faster than the speed of sound, but would not make a sonic crack when fired. Without hesitation, he answered, "Yes, it could be done."

He went on to explain how the physics of projectiles is a bit different than the physics of full-sized aircraft. He said the key would be to design the projectile so it had a smooth flight, with no wobble or turbulence. If you could impart the proper spin on the projectile, and could get it up to supersonic speed while still in the barrel, it could be done.

I could be wrong on a couple of the details of what he said, since it has been many years ago now. But in any case, I distinctly remember him saying that a small arms supersonic projectile could be fired so that it does not make a sonic crack while in flight. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

How can neutrino sensors sense anything outside the ship? Don't the neutrinos from the starship's own power plant blind the sensor? — *D.R.*

No, not really. One solution would be to have a second neutrino sensor mounted on the starship's power plant. Then the sensor computer could take the input from the two sensors and "erase" the neutrinos from the starship's own power plant.

While having the computer erase neutrinos like this isn't foolproof, I'd say it must be something like 99% accurate. The error that might occasionally be introduced with this technique is just one of the many factors that makes sensor readings less than 100% reliable.

This, or some technique like this would have to be done. Whatever method is used to erase the neutrinos from the starship's own power plant, the compensating equipment and circuits are already part of every neutrino sensor package that goes into a starship. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

How do grav plates provide artificial gravity for the inside of a ship deep in space? What "natural gravity" is it that the grav plates are operating on? — *S.W.*

I am amused how wrapped up we get in these games of ours. We discuss the fine points of the physics of grav technology, and it's really all a bunch of "mumbo-jumbo." I just say this to remind us all not to get things too far out of perspective here. Sometimes, when dealing with far future science, it should be enough to simply say: *it just works.*

But, if we didn't get questions like this, we'd fill this column with nothing but dry answers to rules questions, right? So to answer your question, let's invent a bit more "mumbo jumbo" to explain what might be going on here.

I've always reasoned that artificial grav fields are either short range and amplify the gravity of very close small objects substantially, or long range and amplify the gravity of huge massive objects within the range very little — thus maintaining the conservation of matter and energy.

Starship drives and grav modules use the latter form of artificial grav technique to get a drive that maxes out at about 6 gees. But then these devices have a range of thousands to millions of kilometers, and they are using the gravity of and entire world. No matter how many drives or plates you add on to the starship, 6 gees seems to be about all you can get.

Grav plates in a starship are of the first kind: they take the weak natural gravity of the starship and its occupants and amplify it greatly, to get a field that can go up to a gee or two, but it has a range of less than a hundred meters. And a couple of gees is about all you can seem to get out of grav plates this way, no matter how many layers of grav plates you might line the inside of a ship with. This explanation seems reasonable to me.

Let me go back to my earlier remarks about explaining the pseudo-science of Traveller down to a gnat's eyebrow. Marc Miller and the folks at GDW came up with the basics of Traveller's science almost 15 years ago now. Some of the so-called science works well, given our extrapolated understanding of science as we have it today. A few things don't work as well and are harder to explain.

What if I couldn't have explained how grav plates inside a starship work? Does that mean all starships now suddenly become a zero-g environment? Or worse yet, do I stop playing Traveller?

No, I should hope not. We just say, "it must work somehow," and then be done with it. Sometimes I get the sense weTraveller players are spoiled because Traveller is one of the few games whose science hangs together so well. We think we have to dot every scientific "i" and cross every theoretical "t" or the game has lost its plausibility. Just because something seems impossible according to today's science doesn't mean it isn't possible.

Oh boy, now it is time for me to really get on my soap box. I know I've used this illustration before, but it's a good one, because it is true. So I'm going to use it again.

In 1957, a prominent science-fiction writer stated, in print, that the ray guns of Buck Rogers would never really exist — they were just so much make-believe nonsense. In 1960, a mere three years later, the laser was invented. Oops!

About the only real rule when it comes to discussing the plausibility of science fiction's science, is never say never. The first time you do that, you'll probably read about the so called impossibility in next week's newspaper as a breakthrough. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

ERRATA PATROL

Clay Bush, a prominent HIWG member, has pointed out a couple more items of errata in the MegaTraveller *Referee's Manual.* Here they are:

p.80, table 2, Nuclear Dampers.

UCP	*Power*	*Volume*	*Weight*	*MCr*
2	5000	270	300	40
3	7500	540	590	45

p.88, Bearing table.

The last line should read "500,000+"

Thanks, Clay. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

SURVEY SWEEPSTAKES

MEGATRAVELLER JOURNAL NUMBER 2

Let us know what you think! Photocopy the survey below, fill it out for the articles you read, and send it to: MTJ2 Survey Sweepstakes, 515 Willow, Woodburn, OR 97071. Three names will be chosen at random to receive a copy of Alien Vol. 2, Solomani and Aslan. Deadline for entries is Sept.15, 1991.

	Didn't Read	Not Useful	Somewhat Useful	Very Useful
Adventure: Defying the Wolf	☐	☐	☐	☐
Deneb Dossiers: Arabella Von Ericsson	☐	☐	☐	☐
Starship in Detail: Fiery Class Escort	☐	☐	☐	☐
Beginners' Luck: Starship Combat	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gaming Digest: Off the Beaten Path	☐	☐	☐	☐
Life Under the Vargr: Snapshots of Occupation	☐	☐	☐	☐
Random Nuggets	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helm Report	☐	☐	☐	☐
DIS Newsbriefs	☐	☐	☐	☐
Q&A	☐	☐	☐	☐
Traveller's Cache	☐	☐	☐	☐

1. Quality of Cover Art:
☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ So-so

2. Quality of Interior Art:
☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ So-so

Name and Address:

FOR OUR INFORMATION

1. Does your local store stock DGP products?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you have to special order them?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you have to order them direct?
☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Does the store stock our entire product line or just certain products?
☐ Entire product line
☐ Certain products

If only certain products, which ones?

_____

_____

3. How long have you been buying DGP products?
☐ 1 Yr. ☐ 2 Yrs. ☐ 3 Yrs. ☐ 4 Yrs.
☐ 5 Yrs. ☐ 6 Yrs.

4. Do you buy every product or just certain ones?
☐ Every product
☐ Certain products

Comments

THE BEST OF

the TRAVELLERS' Digest

Revisit the magazine that helped you view the **Traveller** universe as never before. *The Best of the Travellers' Digest* is a 104-page, all-**MegaTraveller** potpourri of the most popular articles from *The Travellers' Digest* magazine, issues 5 through 18. Much of the text has been re-edited to bring it up-to-date with Rebellion events. And of course, there will be all-new material as well!

- Collected for the first time is William W.Connors' four-part *Psionic Knights Campaign*, re-edited into the cinematic nugget format and re-illustrated with the striking work of **MegaTraveller** artist Blair Reynolds.
- The *Complete Rebel Reporter* fleshes out our look at all the factions of the Imperium-wide Rebellion.
- Up-dated biographies on our four Imperium-touring characters, Akidda Laagiir, Dur Telemon, Theodore Krenstein, and pseudobiological robot Aybee Wan Owen, showing what they're doing in 1121.
- And the list goes on and on!

So, if you missed those earlier issues or if you just want to stay on the cutting edge of **MegaTraveller's** detailed universe, you need *The Best of the Travellers' Digest.* Available this fall at your local hobby and game stores or direct mail. Please, no pre-orders. $12.95.

Digest Group Publications
515 Willow Ave., Woodburn, OR 97071
Voice or FAX: (503) 981-4752
VISA and Mastercard accepted

MEGATRAVELLER

NEXT ISSUE

The MegaTraveller JOURNAL

New 104 - page format!
Highlights include:

- Sydkai Class Cruiser
  A look at a new cruiser designed to deal with Rebellion-era priorities within the Domain.
- Megacorps: 1121
  The Rebellion forever changed the way Imperial space does business. Greg Videll will show us just how much the Imperium's star-spanning economy was damaged by the civil war and how businesses have adjusted to cope.
- Deneb Dossier – Jeramii Boden:
  Find out what kind of person it takes to be chosen as spokesman for the Travellers' Aid Society. You'll get up-close and personal with the man who is often called the "ultimate traveller".
- And many more pages of *new* MegaTraveller support!

MEGATRAVELLER

For a thousand years, the Imperium ruled the stars. Now, its tranquility is shattered by civil war. The once-solid Imperium has disintegrated into many petty empires, each fighting for its piece of the galaxy. It's a dangerous place, and your goal is to survive and just maybe turn the tide.

- The leading science-fiction role-playing game.
- Background coverage of history, personalities, equipment.
- Rules coverage for ship design, ship combat, tasks, animal encounters, character generation, and more.

MegaTraveller.
Boxed set. *Players' Manual. Referee's Manual. Imperial Encyclopedia.*
Plus a detailed star map of a complete Imperial sector.
GDW: 0210. $30.00.

MEGATRAVELLER

At better hobby stores everywhere. Order by mail (add 10% for shipping) or phone (Visa/MasterCard).

309-452-3632

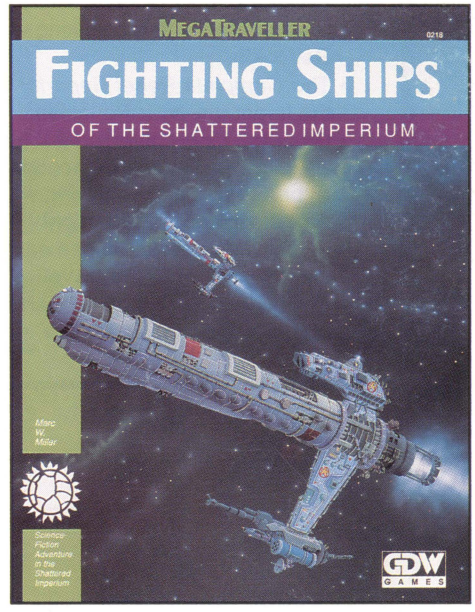
GDW GAMES

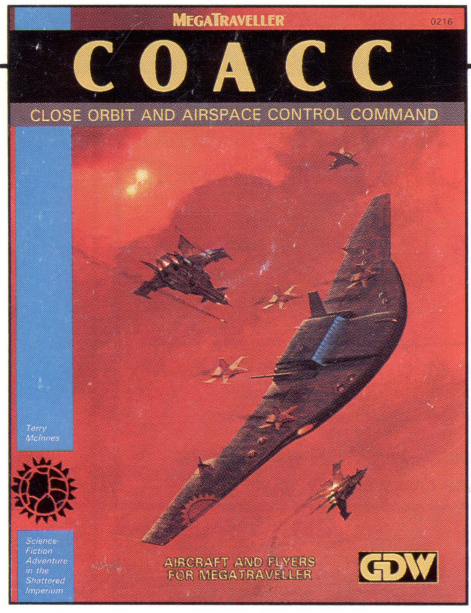
P.O. Box 1646
Bloomington, IL 61702-1646

FIGHTING SHIPS of the Shattered Imperium

The ships of the Imperial Navy are in the hands of every Rebellion faction. Here are 58 ships of the Imperial Navy—from battleships to battle riders, from dreadnoughts to escorts, many with full-page illustrations.

Fighting Ships of the Shattered Imperium.
96-page book.
GDW: 0218. $10.00.





COACC

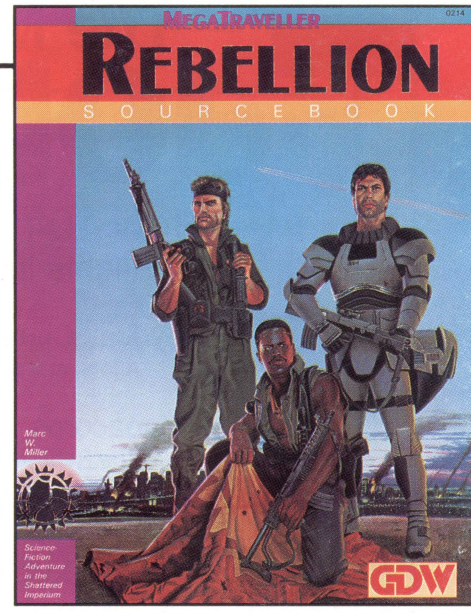
COACC controls aircraft in the Imperium. Here is aircraft pilot character generation, aircraft design and combat, plus a campaign to win the Rebellion on one world.

96-page book. GDW: 0216. $10.00.

REFEREE'S COMPANION

Rules expansions for the **MegaTraveller** referee: includes large-scale combat, timekeeping, communications, research, mapping , technology, and aliens.

96-page book. GDW: 0215. $10.00.



REBELLION SOURCEBOOK

A fierce Rebellion shakes the Imperium—each faction fights for a piece of the rich star-spanning empire. Here are the Rebellion's sides, leaders, territories, and equipment.

96-page book. GDW: 0214. $10.00.